

# Increasing Participation in Army Continuing Education

eArmyU and Effects of Possible  
Program Changes

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ARROYO CENTER

20050516 110

The research described in this report was sponsored by the United States Army under Contract No. DASW01-01-C-0003.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Increasing participation in Army continuing education : eArmyU and effects of possible program changes /

Bruce R. Orvis ... [et al.].

p. cm.

"MG-293."

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8330-3708-0 (pbk.)

1. Soldiers—Education, Non-military—United States. 2. United States. Army. 3.

University extension—

United States. I. Orvis, Bruce R.

U716.I53 2005

378.1'758'08835500973—dc22

2004026796

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Published 2005 by the RAND Corporation

1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050

201 North Craig Street, Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1516

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## Preface

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This monograph presents the results of research on the eArmyU distance learning program. The project was requested by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. The research should interest policymakers concerned with the benefits and costs of supporting soldiers through continuing education services.

The primary focus of this study is to help make eArmyU available to more individuals while controlling program costs. Prior to the initiation of this study, eArmyU was offered to enlisted soldiers at 11 primary sites, with enrollment of approximately 30,000 soldiers. The Army was interested in making the program available Army-wide, but was concerned about the potential cost of doing so. Historically, the incremental cost of eArmyU versus the Tuition Assistance program has been attributed primarily to the laptop computer provided under eArmyU. The strategy advanced by senior Army leaders was to reduce costs by no longer funding the laptop. However, the effects of removing the laptop or other eArmyU provisions were unknown. These include (1) the willingness and ability of soldiers to participate and (2) the effects of the current program and of possible program changes on retention, on readiness and duty performance, and on the quality of life for soldiers and their families. For this reason, laptop-related issues receive the closest scrutiny in this research effort.

The research was conducted within RAND Arroyo Center's Manpower and Training Program. RAND Arroyo Center, part of the RAND Corporation, is a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the United States Army.

For more information on RAND Arroyo Center, contact the Director of Operations (telephone 310-393-0411, extension 6419; FAX 310-451-6952; email [Marcy\\_Agmon@rand.org](mailto:Marcy_Agmon@rand.org)), or visit Arroyo's web site at <http://www.rand.org/ard/>.

# Contents

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Preface.....	iii
Tables .....	vii
Summary.....	ix
Acknowledgments.....	xix
List of Acronyms.....	xxi

## CHAPTER ONE

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Background .....	1
Study Purpose.....	3
Methodology.....	4
Pilot Test.....	4
Focus Groups .....	5
Personnel Records.....	7
Survey .....	7
How the Report Is Organized .....	9

## CHAPTER TWO

<b>Results</b> .....	11
Participation in eArmyU.....	11
Characteristics of Current Program Participants .....	11
Alternative Programs.....	15
Retention.....	24
Duty Performance .....	26
Quality of Life .....	27

What Soldiers Value Most About eArmyU and Areas for Improvement..	27
What Is Valued Most .....	27
Mixed Reviews for Some Program Aspects .....	28
Recoupment Issues.....	30

### CHAPTER THREE

Recommendations .....	33
Increase the Enlisted Force's Access to Education Opportunities .....	33
Constrain eArmyU Costs per Soldier While Facilitating Access .....	34
Minimize a Soldier's Risk of Recoupment in eArmyU .....	35

### APPENDIX

A. Focus Group Protocols .....	37
B. Army Education Survey .....	53
C. Supplemental Data .....	61
D. Additional Input from the Education Center Staff Focus Groups....	75
E. Informal Cost-Avoidance Analysis .....	77

Bibliography .....	79
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## Tables

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1. Crosswalk of Analysis Areas and Methods .....	9
2. Soldiers' Likelihood of Participating in eArmyU .....	12
3. Prospective Participation in eArmyU .....	12
4. Participation Rates in Pilot Programs .....	16
5. Potential Participation Rates in eArmyU .....	18
6. Changes in Potential Participation Rates in eArmyU Given Removal of Laptop Option .....	19
7. Changes in Potential Participation Rates in eArmyU Given Required Purchase of Laptop .....	22
8. Difference in Months to Expiration of Term of Service by Soldier Characteristics .....	25
C.1. Response Distributions for Survey Questions .....	61
C.2. Need Free Laptop to Participate in eArmyU .....	70
C.3. Means and Standard Deviations for Regression Variables .....	71

## Summary

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### Background

The United States Army offers a continuing education program called eArmyU (an e-learning, computer-based program) that allows enlisted soldiers to earn college credits and degrees at no or low cost while they serve on active duty. eArmyU provides access to more than 90 online programs from more than 20 colleges and universities with the credits being fully transferable among those institutions. The program includes up to 100 percent funding for tuition, books, fees, email, and an internet service provider (ISP). The current program also provides a fully-funded personal laptop computer and a 24-hour/7-day-a-week helpdesk. Participating schools must provide the maximum allowable credit for military training and experience as well as for tests such as the CLEP (College Level Examination Program) (this is not necessarily the case with unaffiliated schools). eArmyU also provides an integrated online interface with all participating schools, with common application and registration forms, a degree map customized for the soldier that tracks his or her progress toward degrees, an integrated searchable catalog from the schools, and library, tutoring, and academic advisement services.

At the time of this study, to be eligible for the program, a soldier had to complete a Service Remaining Requirement (SRR) of three years, either through his or her current obligation or through exten-



sion of that obligation or reenlistment.<sup>1</sup> The enrollee in eArmyU also had an obligation to successfully complete at least 12 semester hours of courses during the first two years of enrollment.

At the time this research was requested, the Army offered the eArmyU program at 11 primary sites<sup>2</sup> and had an enrollment of just over 30,000 soldiers. The Army was interested in making the eArmyU program available Army-wide, but was concerned about the potential cost of doing so. At the beginning of FY03, a change in DoD policy raised the maximum tuition assistance for continuing education classes from 75 to 100 percent, eliminating an important difference between these classes and those taken under eArmyU. As a result, the incremental cost of eArmyU versus the tuition assistance program was attributed primarily to the laptop provided under eArmyU, and program administrators considered discontinuing funding for the laptop in order to reduce eArmyU's per-capita cost. However, the effects of removing the laptop or other eArmyU provisions were unknown. These effects can be categorized into four broad issues: (1) the willingness and ability of soldiers to participate, (2) the quality of life for soldiers and their families, (3) retention, and (4) readiness and duty performance. In the remainder of this summary, we outline the study methodology used, then move to a discussion of the highlights of the study results.

## **RAND Arroyo Center Study Took a Multi-Method Approach**

To identify the potential effects of changes in the eArmyU program, the study employed four complementary analytical approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> The criteria for eligibility are currently under review. Throughout this document, the "current" program refers to the program benefits and eligibility requirements described here (those in effect at the time of this study).

<sup>2</sup> Primary sites offer enrollments and support to the eArmyU program. Soldiers may be reassigned to other locations and take the program with them, though support is slightly different in these instances.

First, there was a pilot test of alternative eArmyU programs across nine test sites: three sites offering the current program, three (current) sites offering a laptop-optional program, and three (new) sites offering a no-laptop program.

Second, to gather detailed information about eArmyU, 10 focus groups were conducted at the test sites during two-day visits.<sup>3</sup> These included six groups of soldier-eArmyU students, two groups of their immediate supervisors, and two groups of eArmyU counselors and administrators.

Third, personnel records were analyzed to describe how enrollees in eArmyU differ from nonenrollees and to assess the retention effects of the current version of eArmyU. This included assessing the mix of enrollees among those already meeting the SRR, those extending, or those reenlisting and the overall impact on years of service remaining.

Fourth, 8,000 enlisted soldiers were randomly selected to participate in a survey of educational aspirations (including their potential interest in eArmyU and other education programs), their Army career plans, and the linkage between the two.

The pilot test was initiated on January 27, 2003. Site visits and focus groups began on March 5.

## Results

The study results cover four primary areas: participation, retention, duty performance, and quality of life. In addition, the focus groups provided an opportunity to explore the value that soldiers attach to the various elements of the eArmyU program as well as to ask program administrators about issues concerning qualification standards

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<sup>3</sup> Originally, focus groups were to be conducted at each of the nine test sites. This became impractical at three of the sites due to preparations for and deployments related to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as well as low enrollment rates at two of the no-laptop sites (related in part to OIF). Video conferences were conducted with the Education Center staffs at these sites in lieu of the site visits.

for eArmyU program participation. Below, we provide an overview of the points raised in those discussions.

### **Participation**

Who has been most likely to enroll in the traditional eArmyU program? According to the study results analyzing eArmyU records, those especially likely to enroll include:

- African American soldiers,
- female soldiers,
- AFQT Category I–IIIA soldiers (average to above-average intelligence levels),
- married soldiers,
- soldiers with dependents, and
- senior soldiers (especially E6–E7).

The survey further indicates that soldiers planning to reenlist or stay until retirement; those having three or more years to their expiration of term of service (ETS); those wanting two years or more of college or a degree; those already continuing their education or planning to enroll soon; those believing obtaining more education is important to the ability to compete within their military careers or for a civilian job; those confident in their ability to undertake or who prefer online courses; soldiers thinking of leaving the Army for more time with their families; those having a home computer (57 percent); and those needing the free laptop to participate (90 percent say it would help greatly, 52 percent say it is critical) would be more likely to enroll in the current program.

The pilot test results clearly show that the fully-funded laptop is a very important element underlying soldiers' participation in eArmyU. If the laptop is optional, most soldiers will choose to take it, at least in the near term. If the laptop is not provided, eArmyU participation rates are likely to decline significantly. Although the overall pattern of results is clearly downward, the specific numbers in the pilot test results should be interpreted with caution. Procedural and deployment issues occurred during the pilot test that would not

similarly affect a future Army-wide roll-out of the program. These were, most notably, screening procedures for participation, awareness of the laptop program, and Iraq-related deployments. It is possible that the pilot test underestimates the actual take-rate that might be seen.

Indeed, the survey results show greater potential participation rates than the pilot test for the no-laptop version of eArmyU. These results suggest that over time, participation rates with the laptop option might grow to two-thirds or more of eligible soldiers, whereas without the laptop option, participation rates might top out at one-third to one-half, depending on whether soldiers could use their own computers or had to buy the laptop currently provided by the Army. The results also indicate that soldiers currently continuing their education, those needing the laptop to participate in eArmyU (e.g., young soldiers, minorities), those concerned with pay or time away from their family, and male soldiers would be particularly adversely affected by removal of the laptop. Soldiers wanting only a limited amount of college or who have only 1–2 years of service until their ETS are more open to the “no-laptop” option than others.

Results from the focus groups indicate that soldiers would like the option of choosing or not choosing the laptop. Many soldiers need the laptop to participate, and soldiers also stress the benefits of its portability. Some find they can continue their classes while on deployments, training exercises, or temporary duty (TDY). At the same time, some don't need the laptop and would welcome the reduced SRR or course requirements to reduce the commitment and possibility of recoupment.<sup>4</sup> Others want more courses than the \$4,500 annual tuition assistance cap allows after deduction of the technology package; this includes senior soldiers wanting a degree before retirement.

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<sup>4</sup> If the semester hour obligation is not met, eArmyU's recoupment policy requires that the soldier pay a prorated share of the cost of the laptop based on the portion of the requirement not completed. The recoupment policy also requires payment of tuition costs for any failed courses.

## **Retention**

Personnel records from the Total Army Personnel Data Base (TAPDB) and eArmyU files indicate that the current eArmyU program is associated with increased retention. Specifically, the TAPDB shows that eArmyU participants have one year longer to their ETS date than demographically similar nonparticipants, and analysis of eArmyU records shows that 25 to 30 percent of the participants extend or reenlist to participate. The survey results are generally consistent with the finding from the personnel record analysis of longer time to ETS for program participants. They also show that soldiers planning to reenlist or stay to retirement are more interested in eArmyU than those planning to leave the Army soon. Focus group discussions with participants also reflect this mix of greater commitment to an Army career with extensions or reenlistments specifically made to participate in eArmyU. Soldiers are motivated both by improving their in-service promotion opportunities as well as their post-service earnings. Some who reenlisted or extended for eArmyU indicated that they would have done so in the absence of eArmyU, whereas others reported that they extended/reenlisted primarily for eArmyU. Considering the frequency of extensions and reenlistments, the time added to ETS by each, and the fraction of soldiers reporting that they extended/reenlisted in order to participate, the extensions and reenlistments appear to account for up to half of the overall difference in time to ETS.

## **Duty Performance**

Many focus group participants report using their laptops to assist them in performing their duties. They primarily report using them to help process paperwork at home and, for fewer soldiers, at their duty locations. They can also be used on deployments or TDYs in some cases. For junior soldiers or those in more combat-oriented military occupational specialties (MOSs), the eArmyU laptop may be the only computer readily available to them at their duty location or home. Some soldiers and supervisors report improved duty performance from eArmyU classes, participation, or equipment, but this is less

typical. Supervisors generally say they support continued education; they report little interference with performance of duties.

### **Quality of Life**

Many focus group participants report using their eArmyU laptop and ISP routinely to meet personal needs or desires. These include getting work done while spending time with their family, getting information through the Internet, contacting family members or friends, and providing computer access to other family members (including for their schooling or jobs). Some focus group members also cite the importance of the laptop when traveling for the Army or when on leave. Uses include both tasks done locally on the laptop and via Internet connections.

### **What Do Soldiers Value About eArmyU?**

Soldiers indicate that what they value most about eArmyU is its flexibility—they are able to fit in their education around work, family, field training, and other activities. Tuition assistance is also deemed important by soldiers, as are the free books and delivery. While many soldiers reported that the Army-provided laptop is very important, many also use their own computers (unless on travel, when the laptop and ISP are more highly valued). The Army-provided ISP is more important for soldiers who live in barracks; many older soldiers have their own ISP, DSL, or cable service.

Soldiers noted that withdrawing laptops may not be cost free, since the Army may need to monitor and maintain approved on-post computers. They also note the possibility of using the eArmyU laptop or ISP to facilitate completion of NCO courses online or with CDs, or to access Army Knowledge Online, thus reducing the need for other resources for these purposes. Opportunity costs of not providing the free laptop on quality of life and duty performance would need to be accounted for, as would any cost implications of additional time or staff required if soldiers were not able to use the laptop to help keep current on their duties.

### **Qualification Standards**

Soldiers and Education Center staffs both suggested the need for qualification standards for eArmyU. These could include a minimum aptitude level (General Technical (GT) score from the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) and reading grade level; a proven ability to complete college courses or required initial completion of attendance-based or online classes; a placement test to demonstrate computer literacy or a required initial course; a delay in eligibility so junior soldiers can first gain some Army experience to understand their job requirements; and the possibility of requiring an upfront fee to discourage enrollments by soldiers who enroll primarily for laptops or who have not thought through the required commitment to complete their courses and avoid recoupment.<sup>5</sup>

### **Recommendations**

The Army has outlined several key goals for the eArmyU program. We organize our recommendations by the overarching Army goal that they support.

#### **Goal: Increase enlisted access to education opportunities**

To help increase enlisted access to continuing education opportunities, we recommend that the Army open eArmyU to enrollments at more sites, and, eventually, at all posts. It should consider basing the slots allocated to each post on the post's E4–E9 population less current enrollees. We recommend that eArmyU retain its highly valued core features: tuition assistance, free books and delivery, and the common internet interface. To avoid constraining participation among junior soldiers or those with financial challenges, options for an Army-funded laptop and ISP should be included.

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<sup>5</sup> Soldiers who do not complete their semester hour or service remaining requirement are required to reimburse the Army for the value of a prorated share of the laptop cost corresponding to the portion of the 12 semester hours/SRR not completed.

**Goal: Constrain eArmyU costs to facilitate increased enlisted access**

We recommend offering soldiers more options that increase the flexibility of eArmyU for them while controlling costs. These could include options that encourage soldiers not to take unnecessary technology features (laptop or ISP) by reducing requirements (SRR, semester hours) for more limited packages but maintaining eligibility (three years or until ETS if sooner). Soldiers also should be discouraged from taking laptop or ISP features they do not need by having to share costs, for example, by their inclusion in the tuition cap or by initial co-payment. The impact of cost-sharing on more advanced students could be offset by considering graduated tuition assistance caps based on costs for different degrees and courses. The Army could also facilitate continuity of education by improving transferability of credits into eArmyU from other online programs, or to other online programs after completion of eArmyU coursework.

**Goal: Limit soldiers' risk of recoupment in eArmyU**

We recommend that realistic, thorough information be provided to soldiers up front on the challenges as well as opportunities of eArmyU (by counselors, existing students, and supervisors). We recommend enhancing supervisors' and Education Center staff's ability to track a soldier's progress and intervene if needed to help the soldier avoid the need for recoupment.

We also recommend establishing and enforcing prerequisites that enhance a soldier's likelihood of success in eArmyU. After discussions with the Education Center staff members at the current sites, eArmyU administrators should agree on and enforce a qualification-based procedure to fill the slots. As noted, the prerequisites could include thresholds for GT score and reading grade level; the proven ability to complete college courses in the past or required completion of initial attendance-based classes, online classes, or both; a placement test to demonstrate computer literacy or a required course; a minimum time in service or a minimum pay grade (for example, E4); and reducing ill-advised enrollments by requiring limited initial co-payment (amount to be determined, based on affordability, course enrollment, and technology options).



## Acknowledgments

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We would like to express our gratitude to the numerous people in offices across the Army who have made significant contributions to this research. They include those in our client office, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Headquarters, Army Continuing Education System; the Education Center staffs at our pilot test and focus group sites; and the Army Research Institute. At RAND, we are grateful to Jerry Sollinger, Martha Friese, and Karin Suede for their assistance in the preparation of this report. We also gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments provided by our peer reviewers, Matt Lewis and J.D. Eveland.

## List of Acronyms

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ACES	Army Continuing Education Services
AFQT	Armed Forces Qualification Test
AKO	Army Knowledge Online
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
EDMIS	Education Management Information System
ETS	Expiration of Term of Service
FY	Fiscal Year
GT	General Technical
HSG	High School Graduate
ISP	Internet Service Provider
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OML	Order of Merit List
PA	Participation Agreement
SRR	Service Remaining Requirement
TA	Tuition Assistance

TAPDB Total Army Personnel Data Base

TDY Temporary Duty

## Introduction

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### Background

The Army offers a continuing education program called eArmyU (an e-learning, computer-based program) that allows soldiers to earn college credits and degrees at no or low cost while on active duty. The name eArmyU was chosen to emphasize the electronic, online aspect of the program. eArmyU provides access to more than 90 online degree-granting programs from more than 20 colleges and universities. The program provides up to 100 percent funding for tuition, books, fees, email, and an internet service provider (ISP). The current program also provides a fully-funded personal laptop computer and a 24-hour/7-day-a-week telephone-based helpdesk.

All participating schools must provide maximum credit<sup>1</sup> for military training and experience and also for tests such as the CLEP (College Level Examination Program). eArmyU also provides an integrated online interface to all schools, with common application and registration forms, a degree map customized for the soldier to track his or her progress toward the degree of choice, an integrated searchable catalog from the schools, and library, tutoring, and academic advisement services.

At the time of this study, to be eligible for the program the soldier had to meet a service remaining requirement (SRR) of three years and complete at least 12 semester hours during the first two years of

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<sup>1</sup> Schools not participating in eArmyU vary in crediting Army courses/experience.

enrollment.<sup>2</sup> If the semester hour obligation is not met, eArmyU's recoupment policy requires that the soldier pay a prorated share of the cost of the laptop based on the portion of the requirement not completed. The recoupment policy also requires the payment of the tuition costs for any failed courses.

By FY02, eArmyU was offered at 11 primary sites<sup>3</sup> and had enrollments in excess of 30,000 soldiers. A new DoD policy that was implemented at the beginning of FY03 increased the tuition assistance cap for non-eArmyU education programs from 75 percent to 100 percent, up to a ceiling of \$250 per semester hour and \$4,500 a year. This matches the tuition assistance available under eArmyU. Consequently, eArmyU is now distinguished by its other features and by the three-year SRR and 12-semester-hour completion requirements. Under the current eArmyU program, the cost of the technology package—consisting primarily of the laptop—is included under the \$4,500 cap and participation is limited to the period covered under the SRR.

The Army wanted to expand eArmyU beyond the 11 primary sites to make it widely available throughout the enlisted force.<sup>4</sup> However, the Army is concerned about the cost of making the program available Army-wide. The largest difference in the cost of eArmyU as compared to the regular tuition assistance program for continuing education has been attributed primarily to the technology package provided under eArmyU. The cost of the technology package is approximately \$1,350, of which more than \$1,200 represents the cost of the laptop; the remainder is a matriculation fee. As a result, in or-

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<sup>2</sup> The criteria for eligibility are currently under review. Throughout this document, the "current" program refers to program benefits and eligibility requirements described here (those in effect at the time of this study).

<sup>3</sup> Primary sites offer enrollments and support to the eArmyU program. Soldiers may be reassigned to other locations and take the program with them, though support is slightly different in these instances. The eleven primary eArmyU sites are Camp Casey, Camp Hovey, Fort Benning, Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, Fort Carson, Fort Drum, Fort Hood, Fort Lewis, Schofield Barracks, and Fort Wainwright.

<sup>4</sup> The officer corps has a different educational program structure.

der to contain costs and reduce the average cost per soldier, the Army was considering discontinuing funding of the laptop.

However, the effects of removing the laptop provision or of changing other provisions under eArmyU were unknown. Those effects could carry important consequences for soldiers and the Army that bear on the program's viability and its ability to continue to provide the benefits that it now supplies. Negative effects could include:

- less willingness and ability of soldiers to participate;
- weakening of "quality of life" benefits for the soldier and his or her family;
- weakening of retention benefits to the Army;
- weakening of readiness benefits to the Army.

## Study Purpose

To address these issues, the Army asked RAND Arroyo Center to conduct a full-scale analysis of the current eArmyU program and the impacts of potential modifications to the program. To do so, we developed a study that includes four areas of analysis. The first concerns participation rates in eArmyU under the current program and under possible alternative versions. To study this issue, we defined, test-implemented, and evaluated three versions of the eArmyU program. The first is the current version, which provides a fully-funded laptop, in return for which the soldier must meet a three-year SRR and complete 12 semester hours of eArmyU classes within two years. A second version makes the choice of receiving a fully funded laptop optional for the soldier, who can either take a laptop with a three-year SRR and a 12-semester-hour requirement, or decline the laptop for a one-year SRR and a 3-semester-hour minimum requirement. We also examined a third version of the program that does not provide a laptop option at all and, again, requires only a one-year SRR and completion of three semester hours.

The second analysis area concerns the contributions of the current program to the soldier's quality of life and the quality of life of

his or her family. It also focused on the potential impacts of possible changes in the program on those quality of life benefits.

The third area concerns the retention effects of the eArmyU program. Here we sought to quantify the current retention benefits, if any, and contrast them with those that might be likely under alternative versions of eArmyU.

The fourth analysis area concerns the possible effect of the current eArmyU program on the soldier's duty performance or readiness and, again, how those effects might be altered by alternative versions of the program.

## **Methodology**

To address these issues, we employed four complementary evaluation methods: pilot test, focus groups, personnel records, and survey.

### **Pilot Test**

The pilot test examined enrollments under the alternative versions of the program. Based on statistical calculations considering the available slots to enroll in eArmyU, estimated participation rates by the soldiers for those slots, and the different groups for whom we wished to analyze data, we selected nine sites to participate in the mandatory laptop, choice of laptop, and no-laptop programs. We selected three existing sites to offer the current eArmyU program. An additional three existing sites were selected to offer the option of laptop or no laptop. Also included were three new sites—specifically approved for this study—that had not had eArmyU in the past; they offered only the no-laptop program.

The sites were balanced on the size of their soldier populations and the characteristics of those populations that might affect potential interest in eArmyU. This was done based on regression analysis of current participation rates and their relation to demographic and other characteristics. One thousand slots were allocated to each of the

nine test sites. These were to be filled using an Order of Merit List (OML) and eligibility criteria as specified for those OMLs.<sup>5</sup>

### Focus Groups

Focus groups were planned at each test site. Their goal was to gain a greater understanding about the decisionmaking that underlies participation in eArmyU as well as benefits and issues related to participation. We scheduled ten groups at each test site in two-day visits. The pilot test was initiated on January 27, 2003. Site visits and focus groups began on March 5. Deployments to Iraq accelerated in March with the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). OIF deployments affected the progress of the test and availability of focus group respondents such that the trip schedule was modified in process. In the end, the RAND Arroyo Center team visited Schofield Barracks, Fort Hood, Fort Bragg, Fort Drum, Fort Lewis, and Fort Sill. The visits to Fort Campbell, Fort Bliss, and Fort Knox were deferred. The Education Center staffs at these installations were interviewed by videoconference.

Focus group participants fell into the following categories:

- Soldier-students by rank (6 groups)
- Immediate supervisors of participants (2 groups)
- eArmyU counselors and administrators (Department of Army civilians and contractors) (2 groups)

The soldier-student groups consisted of prior enrollees at the laptop sites, a mix of prior and new enrollees at the laptop-optional sites, and new enrollees at the no-laptop sites. This composition of the groups affected the sequencing of the site visits; those consisting of new enrollees had to occur later during the field trip sequence. The soldiers selected to participate in the focus groups were representative of the post's eArmyU participants with respect to race/ethnicity, gender, and military occupational specialty (MOS) mix. The supervisor

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<sup>5</sup> Some changes in the sites initially considered were dictated by the deployments to Iraq; however, statistical analyses indicate that they did not affect the balance of the test site characteristics in a way that would alter the implications of the enrollment results.



groups were selected from the participating soldiers' supervisors and thus matched the soldier-students on MOS distribution. The administrator group composition, on the other hand, was driven by local staffing rather than by program version.<sup>6</sup>

**"Soldier-student" focus groups.** Topics covered in one-hour soldier-student focus group discussions included the soldiers' education goals and reasons for participating in eArmyU. A variety of issues concerning the laptop were examined. These included the necessity and importance of the laptop to the soldiers; their willingness to participate in eArmyU without the laptop in return for reduced requirements; and their own and their families' uses of the laptop, both privately and for duty. We also covered use of the laptop during any deployments, training exercises, or temporary duty assignments that the soldiers might have had. Last, we discussed with the soldiers the value they attach to these various uses of the eArmyU laptop.

A similar set of questions was covered for the provision of the ISP. We also discussed the importance of the other services provided under eArmyU to the soldiers. These included tuition coverage, the free books and book delivery, the online service package, and the maximum credit for military training.

We discussed with the soldiers what actions they took, if any, to meet the SRR requirement as well as their thoughts about the requirement and of alternative mixes of SRR and course requirements. At sites where there was a choice, we discussed with the soldiers the reasons for their choice of the laptop or no-laptop option. When there were soldiers who enrolled in eArmyU without a laptop, we explored what difficulties, if any, they might have encountered.

**Supervisor focus groups.** The supervisor focus groups covered a number of areas, including supervisors' attitudes toward soldiers continuing their education while they were on active duty, both in general and for eArmyU in particular; the effects they perceived of

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<sup>6</sup> Conducting focus groups became impractical at three of the sites due to preparations for and deployments related to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as well as low enrollment rates at two of the no-laptop sites (related in part to OIF). Video conferences were conducted with the Education Center staffs at these sites in lieu of the site visits.

eArmyU participation on the soldiers' duty performance, if any, both positive and negative; and any particular elements of eArmyU they believed either supported or impeded soldiers' readiness.

**eArmyU administrator focus groups.** In the administrator focus groups, we discussed the specifics of the administrators' jobs and their roles in eArmyU, as well as the benefits and drawbacks they saw to their installation of its participation in eArmyU. We explored normal enrollment procedures at the post, the procedures using the Order of Merit Lists, and how they compared with the normal enrollment procedures, both positively and negatively. We also covered the strengths and weaknesses of the eArmyU implementation and administrative procedures. The problems encountered by soldier-students in eArmyU and the ways in which the administrators and counselors attempt to address them were examined.

The focus group protocols for each category are shown in Appendix A.

### **Personnel Records**

In our third analytical method, we examined detailed Total Army Personnel Data Base (TAPDB) (electronic) personnel files in order to determine how enrollees differ from nonenrollees in eArmyU in terms of their demographic and other characteristics. We also used the personnel files to examine the retention impact of the current eArmyU program. We were particularly interested in the mix of enrollees among those already meeting the SRR as compared to those who extended or those who reenlisted. We were also interested in the overall impact of eArmyU participation on years of service remaining. Last, we were interested in the extent to which the retention effects of eArmyU might change under choice and no-laptop programs as compared to the current laptop program.

### **Survey**

Finally, this study fielded a survey to approximately 8,000 randomly selected enlisted soldiers. The survey included items on educational aspirations, Army career plans, and the link between the two. The sample size was based on statistical power calculations considering

(estimated) item means and standard deviations, the subgroups for which we desired to conduct analyses, and the likely return rate of the surveys for analysis. To increase response rates, surveys were mailed to the senior enlisted supervisor on post with a prior email from the Sergeant Major of the Army and an accompanying letter from the G-1 (Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel). The survey is included in Appendix B. Unit supervisors were responsible for distributing the surveys to the sampled soldiers, for collecting the completed surveys, and for returning them to the Army Research Institute, which processed the data. In total, 8,176 surveys were fielded; 91 percent of battalions returned surveys, 65 percent of units did so, and the overall soldier response rate was 55 percent.

The survey covers a broad range of areas. These include the respondent's educational background; current enrollment status; plans for future education; perceived importance of attaining those educational goals; and the perceived role of the Army in facilitating soldiers' education. The survey examines the soldier's plans for his or her military career; his computer access at various locations on post or at home; and the usage of those computers. The survey also covers the soldier's potential interest in eArmyU. This includes his or her overall interest; his interest relative to other education programs; the possible impact of eArmyU on that soldier's retention decisions; the importance of a fully funded laptop to the soldier; and the effects of the current and alternative SRR and semester hour requirements on the soldier's likelihood of participating in the eArmyU program. Finally, the survey collects a variety of demographic information for use in the analysis.

Table 1 shows the crosswalk of the four evaluation methods with the areas of analysis. As shown, the focus groups were unique in covering all four analysis areas: prospective participation rates, retention effects, impact on readiness or duty performance, and quality of life benefits for the soldier.

**Table 1**  
**Crosswalk of Analysis Areas and Methods**

Method	Participation	Retention	Readiness	Quality of Life
Pilot test	✓			
Focus groups	✓	✓	✓	✓
Survey	✓	✓		
Personnel records	✓	✓		

**How the Report Is Organized**

The remainder of the report presents the results of our analysis and concludes with our recommendations.

## Results

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This chapter presents our eArmyU study results. We present results in the following four categories: participation, retention, duty performance, and quality of life. We also discuss the focus group results concerning what soldiers most value about eArmyU as well as the areas in which they believe it could be improved.

### Participation in eArmyU

#### Characteristics of Current Program Participants

The results of multiple-regression analysis of the personnel file data indicate that a number of variables distinguish who has been especially likely to enroll in the current eArmyU program. African American soldiers, female soldiers, high-aptitude soldiers (AFQT Category I–IIIA), married soldiers, those with dependents, and more senior soldiers (especially E6–E7) have been more likely to enroll in the eArmyU program. These results are shown in Table 2.

Table 3 shows survey data concerning prospective participation in eArmyU. According to the survey data, soldiers who are planning to reenlist or stay until retirement or who have three or more years until their expiration of term of service (ETS) would be more likely to enroll than others. These data show that most soldiers enrolling in eArmyU are not planning to separate from the Army in the near term.

**Table 2**  
**Soldiers' Likelihood of Participating in eArmyU**  
**(0 to 1; N = 175,696)**

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Race/ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)		
African American	0.012	< .0001
Asian	-0.012	0.014
Hispanic	0.005	0.094
Other non-white	-0.002	0.696
Male	-0.045	< .0001
Married	0.042	< .0001
AFQT Category I-III A	0.056	< .0001
Number of children (vs. none)		
1	0.026	< .0001
2	0.050	< .0001
3 or more	0.066	< .0001
Pay grade (vs. Private)		
Corporal/Specialist	0.017	< .0001
Sergeant	0.089	< .0001
Staff Sergeant	0.200	< .0001
Sergeant First Class	0.199	< .0001
First Sergeant/Master Sergeant	0.108	< .0001
Sergeant Major/Command Sergeant Major	0.049	< .0001

NOTE: Regression variables include controls for timing and extent of eArmyU program introduction across existing sites.

**Table 3**  
**Prospective Participation in eArmyU**  
**(0% to 100%; N = 3,941)**

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Intercept	-34.284	< .0001
How likely to extend current term of service or reenlist (0 to 100)	0.128	< .0001
Level of education (vs. HSG/GED)		
Less than high school graduate/no GED	-0.891	0.839
1-2 years college, no degree	0.080	0.949
2+ years college or degree	-1.955	0.252
Educational goal (vs. 2+ years of college or degree)		
High school graduation or GED	-9.790	0.011
1-2 years college, no degree	-7.180	0.020

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Importance of reaching highest level of education (1 to 5)	-0.435	0.573
Importance in continuing civilian education while in Army (1 to 5)	4.969	< .0001
The Army has a responsibility to assist soldier in completing education (1 to 5)	1.269	0.045
Are you currently continuing your education or planning to continue? (vs. do not plan to continue)		
Currently continuing education	11.184	< .0001
Plan to enroll soon	8.925	< .0001
Plan to enroll after leaving active duty	2.365	0.176
Undecided about continuing education	-3.459	0.229
Mother's highest level of education (vs. HSG/GED)		
Less than high school	0.378	0.823
1-2 years college, no degree	0.082	0.960
2+ years college or degree	-3.338	0.050
Postgraduate education	0.883	0.651
Don't know	-5.145	0.017
Years left to ETS (vs. 3 or more years)		
< 1 year	-5.743	0.002
1-2 years	-9.525	< .0001
2-3 years	-3.288	0.018
Important to obtain more education to compete for civilian job	3.613	< .0001
Important to obtain more education to compete in military career	1.914	0.000
If you left the Army, how difficult to obtain good civilian job (1 to 5)	-1.114	0.030
Reason to leave the Army before retirement		
Pay	2.780	0.122
Time separated from family	4.590	0.005
Quality of life	1.684	0.287
Promotion opportunity	4.964	0.025
Continue education	3.488	0.080
Don't plan to leave	1.482	0.497
Confidence in completing courses online (1 to 5)	6.515	< .0001
Prefer online setting (vs. classroom)	3.750	< .0001
Computer access		
At home	4.129	0.001
At work	-2.251	0.059
In training classroom	-4.129	0.089
Other location	0.702	0.607
Need free laptop to participate in eArmyU	6.790	< .0001
Male	0.351	0.823

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Pay grade (vs. Private)		
Corporal/Specialist	0.815	0.535
Sergeant	2.232	0.157
Staff Sergeant	2.062	0.306
Sergeant First Class or higher	5.628	0.042
Years of active service	-0.073	0.274
Year current term ends (ETS)	-0.231	0.074
ETS not specified	0.091	0.953
Race/ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)		
Hispanic	1.035	0.469
African American	1.245	0.357
Other nonwhite	4.204	0.027
Married	0.184	0.886
Number of dependent children in residence (0 to 3+, coded 1 to 4)	-0.926	0.141
Job type (vs. combat)		
Combat support	1.763	0.283
Combat service support	0.740	0.556
Force multiplier*	1.522	0.399

\* Force multiplier MOSs in this analysis include Air Defense Artillery, Aviation, Special Forces, Psychological Operations, and Military Police.

Results also show that soldiers interested in education say they are more likely to enroll. This includes those wanting two or more years of college or a degree, those believing that obtaining more education is important to their ability to compete within their military careers or for a civilian job, or those who are already continuing their education or planning to do so in the near future. As one might expect, soldiers most likely to enroll in eArmyU indicate that they are confident in their ability to complete online courses or prefer online courses to traditional classroom ones.

Enrollment in eArmyU also appears to be related to soldiers' desire to have more time with their families. We find that soldiers who indicate that they might leave the Army to spend more time with their family are more likely to take advantage of eArmyU opportunities.

Soldiers who have a home computer—57 percent of the soldiers according to the survey data—are more likely to indicate they would



enroll in eArmyU, possibly because they are more computer-proficient and more comfortable with computers than soldiers without home computers. At the same time, soldiers who need a free laptop to participate also indicate they are more likely to enroll. Of the soldiers surveyed, 90 percent said that having a free laptop would help greatly in their participation, and just over half said that the laptop was critical.

Appendix C shows the complete survey results and the means and standard deviations for the regression variables.

### Alternative Programs

**Pilot test results.** The pilot test was initiated on January 27, 2003 and ran until June 2003. Table 4 shows the participation rates in the pilot test programs through June when the test concluded. The results show that in the current environment, soldiers given a choice of a laptop will choose the laptop version as compared to the no-laptop version, and that enrollment rates where there is only a no-laptop version will be much lower. Thus, the pilot test suggests that eliminating the laptop would substantially lower enrollment rates in eArmyU.<sup>1</sup>

While the implications of the pilot test results are clear, the precise enrollment numbers should be interpreted with caution for a number of reasons. First, the participation rates and the demographics of the soldiers participating may have been affected by the Order of Merit List procedure. This is not necessarily the procedure that will be used in the future for eArmyU, and the results might differ somewhat given other enrollment procedures. Second, the rates of processing the OMLs varied across sites. The sites that took more time to process the OMLs showed correspondingly slower rates of enrollment in the program. This effect appears in the variation in enrollment rates. In general, the enrollment process under the OML

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<sup>1</sup> The pilot test was concluded earlier than planned to preserve eArmyU enrollment opportunities for soldiers deploying in support of OIF. This did not affect the implications of the test results.

**Table 4**  
**Participation Rates in Pilot Programs**

Site	Program	New Contracts	
		3-Year SRR (laptop)	1-Year SRR (no laptop)
Schofield Barracks	Laptop	108	
Fort Hood	Laptop	150	
Fort Drum	Laptop	1,000	
Fort Campbell	Laptop optional	331	8
Fort Bragg	Laptop optional	691	10
Fort Lewis	Laptop optional	137	4
Fort Bliss	No laptop		18
Fort Sill	No laptop		45
Fort Knox	No laptop		17

procedure was reported to be slower than it would be under other procedures for enrollment in eArmyU, as it required more steps than some other processes. Also, focus group participants reported varying procedures across units in composing the lists. For example, some of the soldiers preparing OMLs at laptop-optional sites said they were not aware of the no-laptop option and the one-year service remaining requirement; thus, they did not process soldiers with fewer than three years remaining who might have been interested in the no-laptop option. Relatedly, the deployments to Iraq affected enrollments, and those effects varied across sites.

Third, soldiers were generally aware, by word of mouth or otherwise, of the laptop program at both the choice and no-laptop sites, and they may have been waiting to enroll in the laptop program at these sites. Thus, the participation rates under the no-laptop option and the rate of choosing a laptop at the laptop-optional sites were affected by the existence of the current eArmyU program and might be different in its absence.

Finally, as written, the Participation Agreement (PA) for the no-laptop option did not guarantee eArmyU participation after the SRR was met. This is a consequence of having borrowed the language for the one-year SRR from the agreement for the three-year SRR (i.e.,

matching eligibility to the minimum mandatory remaining time in service). However, in conversations with staff at the Education Centers, we were consistently informed that soldiers' choice of whether to enroll at the no-laptop sites or choice of a laptop at the laptop-optional sites was primarily based on the soldiers' desire for the laptop, and that there was little discussion of this particular PA feature.

**Survey results.** In total, 8,176 surveys were fielded during the winter of 2003; because of unit deployments, 545 surveys were undeliverable. Soldiers returned 4,203 usable surveys, a response rate of 55 percent (4,203 of 7,631). The unit response rate was 65 percent (295 of 453 units), and the battalion response rate was 91 percent (92 of 101 battalions).

The survey results are largely consistent with those of the pilot test in showing a decline in eArmyU interest without the laptop. However, the survey results suggest that over the longer term there would be a greater take-rate of the no-laptop option than is reflected in the pilot test data. That is, the survey indicates greater interest than was exhibited during the pilot test period. According to the survey data, the estimated potential participation rate in eArmyU with the laptop would be approximately two-thirds of enlisted soldiers. Without the laptop, there would be a significant decline to something in the range of 50 percent. Due to concerns about the compatibility of other computers with eArmyU, we also assessed an option in which soldiers would be required to use the laptop provided by the Army, but they would have to buy that particular laptop. That resulted in a substantial further decline in interest in the program to a level of approximately 35 percent. These results are shown in Table 5.

Who would be especially affected by withdrawal of the laptop option? The survey data suggest that soldiers currently continuing their education, or planning to enroll soon, would be significantly less likely than other groups to continue to enroll in eArmyU if the laptop option were removed. This is likely because without the laptop, eArmyU would lose a key feature that distinguishes it from the programs these soldiers already participate in. Not surprisingly, soldiers

**Table 5**  
**Potential Participation Rates in eArmyU**  
**(N = 4,041)**

Type of Program	Estimated Participation Rate
Laptop	66.5%
No laptop	52.0%
Have to buy standard laptop	35.2%

NOTE: RAND has previously conducted a number of studies of the conversion rates for stated behavioral propensities (e.g., enlistment/reenlistment rates). Based on this work, we have used two different techniques to estimate the above probabilities. The one presented in the table is our best, conservative estimate. An alternative estimation provides upper-bound estimates; these numbers are 74%, 62%, and 45% for the laptop, no laptop, and buy laptop programs, respectively.

who said they needed a laptop to participate—such as younger soldiers and minorities such as Hispanics (see Appendix C)—would be disproportionately affected by its removal. The survey data indicate that laptop removal would particularly affect young soldiers, race/ethnic minority groups, such as Hispanics, and those concerned with their pay or time away from their family. Male soldiers were also significantly more likely than females to lose interest in eArmyU participation under the no-laptop option. In contrast, soldiers only wanting to take a few college courses or those who only had a year or two of service remaining were more open to the no-laptop option. This is likely because the reduced SRR for that option would not require them to extend their current service remaining obligation. The results are shown in Table 6.

Who would be especially affected by having to buy the current laptop according to the survey data? The following three groups were more likely to lose interest in enrolling under those conditions:

- soldiers currently continuing their education,
- planning to enroll soon, or
- confident in their online learning abilities.

**Table 6**  
**Changes in Potential Participation Rates in eArmyU Given Removal of Laptop Option**  
**(-100% to 100%; N = 3,941)**

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Intercept	21.810	0.000
How likely to extend current term of service or reenlist (0 to 100)	-0.006	0.748
Level of education (vs. HSG/GED)		
Less than high school graduate/no GED	-2.877	0.556
1-2 years college, no degree	1.274	0.354
2+ years college or degree	-0.136	0.943
Educational goal (vs. 2+ years of college or degree)		
High school graduation or GED	4.442	0.301
1-2 years college, no degree	7.858	0.022
Importance of reaching highest level of education (1 to 5)	1.576	0.066
Importance of continuing civilian education while in Army (1 to 5)	-0.382	0.595
The Army has a responsibility to assist soldier in completing education (1 to 5)	-1.481	0.036
Are you currently continuing your education or planning to continue? (vs. do not plan to continue)		
Currently continuing education	-8.420	< .0001
Plan to enroll soon	-3.961	0.026
Plan to enroll after leaving active duty	-1.925	0.322
Undecided about continuing education	-2.202	0.490
Mother's highest level of education (vs. HSG/GED)		
Less than high school	0.000	1.000
1-2 years college, no degree	-0.193	0.916
2+ years college or degree	3.079	0.104
Postgraduate education	0.087	0.968
Don't know	1.214	0.612
Years left to ETS (vs. 3 or more years)		
< 1 year	-1.362	0.502
1-2 years	5.732	0.000
2-3 years	2.722	0.079
Important to obtain more education to compete for civilian jobs (1 to 5)	-1.560	0.064
Important to obtain more education to compete in military career (1 to 5)	-0.398	0.500
If you left the Army, how difficult to obtain good civilian job (1 to 5)	0.762	0.182

Table 6 (continued)

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Reason to leave the Army before retirement		
Pay	-4.942	0.013
Time separated from family	-3.852	0.034
Quality of life	-2.725	0.121
Promotion opportunity	-3.343	0.174
Continue education	-2.748	0.214
Don't plan to leave	-3.957	0.103
Confidence in completing courses online (1 to 5)	-1.692	0.002
Prefer online setting (vs. classroom) (1 to 5)	-0.950	0.039
Computer access		
At home	2.115	0.112
At work	-0.214	0.872
In training classroom	3.755	0.164
Other location	-1.093	0.471
Need free laptop to participate in eArmyU (1 to 3)	-6.739	< .0001
Pay grade (vs. Private)		
Corporal/Specialist	-0.231	0.874
Sergeant	0.962	0.583
Staff Sergeant	1.018	0.649
Sergeant First Class or higher	1.193	0.698
Years of active service	0.072	0.335
Year current term ends (ETS)	-0.035	0.809
ETS not specified	-1.451	0.398
Race/Ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)		
Hispanic	1.229	0.439
African American	1.272	0.397
Other nonwhite	-1.622	0.441
Male	-4.514	0.010
Married	-2.644	0.064
Number of dependent children in residence (0 to 3+, coded 1 to 4)	1.328	0.057
Job type (vs. combat)		
Combat support	-0.852	0.640
Combat service support	-0.386	0.782
Force multiplier	-2.678	0.181

As noted, this is the case probably because that version of the program really does not offer these soldiers much over their current (or prospective) educational programs. Soldiers concerned about being competitive for a civilian job were particularly affected also, as were those planning to leave the military before retirement for better pay, better quality of life, more time with their family, or to continue their education. Thus, soldiers who focused on civilian opportunities were less likely to be willing to continue their education in the Army in the event that they had to pay some \$1,300 for the laptop. Soldiers with computer access were also significantly less likely to maintain their interest in the program, presumably because they had no need to buy the laptop. Soldiers needing a laptop to participate in eArmyU were also disproportionately less likely to indicate they would continue to enroll in eArmyU under this program. This presumably reflects the same financial constraints that led them to indicate that they needed the laptop to begin with.

As is true for the laptop-optional version, soldiers who only wanted a little bit of college or who had only a year or two of service remaining were more open to this program. Again, this is presumably because this version of the program would not require them to extend their service obligation. The survey data also suggest that minority soldiers would be more likely than their white non-Hispanic counterparts to maintain their interest in eArmyU if they had to buy the laptop.

The results are shown in Table 7.

**Focus group results.** Site visits and focus groups began on March 5, 2003. Their progress was affected by Iraq-related deployments. In the end, the RAND Arroyo Center team visited Schofield Barracks, Fort Hood, Fort Bragg, Fort Drum, Fort Lewis, and Fort Sill. The visits to Fort Campbell, Fort Bliss, and Fort Knox were deferred and, instead, the Education Center staffs at these installations were interviewed by videoconference.

**Table 7**  
**Changes in Potential Participation Rates in eArmyU Given Required Purchase of Laptop**  
**(-100% to 100%; N = 3,941)**

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Intercept	23.363	0.000
How likely to extend current term of service or reenlist (0 to 100)	0.01	0.674
Level of education (vs. HSG/GED)		
Less than high school graduate/no GED	4.827	0.388
1-2 years college, no degree	-0.081	0.959
2+ years college or degree	0.181	0.933
Educational goal (vs. 2+ years of college or degree)		
High school graduation or GED	7.007	0.155
1-2 years college (no degree)	8.805	0.025
Importance of reaching highest level of education (1 to 5)	3.274	0.001
Importance of continuing civilian education while in Army (1 to 5)	-2.032	0.014
The Army has a responsibility to assist soldier in completing education (1 to 5)	-2.431	0.003
Are you currently continuing your education or planning to continue? (vs. do not plan to continue)		
Currently continuing education	-10.338	< .0001
Plan to enroll soon	-6.076	0.003
Plan to enroll after leaving active duty	-4.742	0.033
Undecided about continuing education	-0.886	0.809
Mother's highest level of education (vs. HSG/GED)		
Less than high school	-1.303	0.544
1-2 years college, no degree	-1.103	0.598
2+ years college or degree	2.768	0.202
Postgraduate education	-3.211	0.197
Don't know	4.346	0.114
Years left to ETS (vs. 3 or more years)		
< 1 year	1.836	0.430
1-2 years	8.645	< .0001
2-3 years	4.392	0.013
Important to obtain more education to compete for civilian jobs (1 to 5)	-3.993	< .0001
Important to obtain more education to compete in military career (1 to 5)	0.388	0.566
If you left the Army, how difficult to obtain good civilian job (1 to 5)	1.530	0.020



Table 7 (continued)

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Reason to leave the Army before retirement		
Pay	-8.442	0.000
Time separated from family	-7.596	0.000
Quality of life	-5.843	0.004
Promotion opportunity	-2.204	0.434
Continue education	-5.541	0.029
Don't plan to leave	-10.162	0.000
Confidence in completing courses online (1 to 5)	-5.009	< .0001
Prefer online setting (vs. classroom) (1 to 5)	-0.444	0.399
Computer access		
At home	-5.067	0.001
At work	-4.710	0.002
In training classroom	3.453	0.264
Other location	-2.550	0.142
Need free laptop to participate in eArmyU (1 to 3)	-3.993	0.000
Pay grade (vs. Private)		
Corporal/Specialist	-2.895	0.083
Sergeant	-3.820	0.058
Staff Sergeant	-1.723	0.502
Sergeant First Class or higher	-5.053	0.151
Years of active service	-0.009	0.911
Year current term ends (ETS)	0.192	0.242
ETS not specified	4.021	0.041
Race/Ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)		
Hispanic	5.323	0.004
African American	6.360	0.000
Other nonwhite	-1.202	0.618
Male	0.564	0.777
Married	-1.478	0.366
Number of dependent children in residence (0 to 3+, coded 1 to 4)	0.809	0.312
Job type (vs. combat)		
Combat support	-2.973	0.155
Combat service support	-0.145	0.928
Force multiplier	-3.507	0.127

The focus group results are consistent with the survey data in suggesting that soldiers would like the option of participating in eArmyU with or without an Army-furnished laptop. As is true for the survey, many soldiers indicated that they need the laptop to participate; thus, receiving the laptop from the Army should definitely be an option. Soldiers also stressed the importance of the laptop's portability. Though the laptop is not always usable in the field, some soldiers are able to continue classes while on deployments, training exercises, or TDY. Many soldiers value the laptop for use in Army duties as well as for personal use, and some use the laptop routinely at their home station workplace. Nonetheless, many soldiers say that they would like the Army to offer a choice of participating with or without the laptop. This is because some soldiers do not need the laptop and would welcome the reduced SRR or reduced course requirement (to reduce their commitment under eArmyU and the possibility of re-coupment should they fail to meet the course requirement). Other soldiers want to take more courses than the \$4,500 annual tuition cap allows, particularly after the deduction of the technology package. Thus, they would welcome being able to enroll without the technology package and to use the \$4,500 strictly for classes. This includes senior soldiers who want to obtain a degree before their ETS. Survey and focus group results indicate that this group of soldiers is more likely to own a computer.

## **Retention**

Our research indicates that the current eArmyU program promotes retention. As shown in Table 8, our analysis of personnel records from the Total Army Personnel Data Base (TAPDB) indicates that eArmyU participants have a year longer to their ETS date than other demographically similar nonparticipants in eArmyU. Records of eArmyU enrollments indicate that some 25 to 30 percent of the participants extend or reenlist in order to participate in eArmyU. Considering the frequency of extensions and reenlistments, the time

**Table 8**  
**Difference in Months to Expiration of Term of Service by Soldier**  
**Characteristics**  
**(N = 175,606)**

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
eArmyU Participant	12.546	< .0001
Race/Ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)		
African American	-2.299	< .0001
Asian	-1.585	0.000
Hispanic	-1.788	< .0001
Other nonwhite	-1.491	0.001
Male	0.583	0.014
Married	0.317	0.095
AFQT Category I-III A	3.107	< .0001
Number of children (vs. none)		
1	0.014	0.957
2	1.095	0.000
3 or more	0.647	0.078
Pay grade (vs. Private)		
Corporal/Specialist	-6.085	< .0001
Sergeant	-1.260	< .0001
Staff Sergeant	12.234	< .0001
Sergeant First Class	33.068	< .0001
First Sergeant/Master Sergeant	32.647	< .0001
Sergeant Major/Command Sergeant Major	29.284	< .0001

NOTE: Regression variables include controls for timing and extent of eArmyU program introduction across existing sites.

added to ETS by each, and the fraction of soldiers reporting that they extended/reenlisted in order to participate, the extensions and reenlistments appear to account for up to half of the overall difference in time to ETS. The remaining portion is attributable to the higher participation rates among soldiers planning to remain in the Army for longer periods, noted earlier.<sup>2</sup>

The survey results are consistent with the personnel record analysis. Extensions or reenlistments are likely for some 40 to 50 per-

<sup>2</sup> An informal cost-avoidance assessment suggests that the recruitment and retention incentive costs required to yield the same man-year gain provided by the laptop exceed the cost of the laptop. See Appendix E.

cent of the respondents if they could participate in eArmyU, according to the survey data. At the same time, soldiers planning to reenlist or stay until retirement are more interested in eArmyU. Presumably this is because of the reduced opportunity cost of the three-year SRR requirement.

The focus group discussions with participants in eArmyU similarly reflect a mix of greater commitment to an Army career among the participants as well as extensions or reenlistments specifically made to participate in the program. Participation is motivated both by in-service promotion opportunities that depend on education and by post-service earnings. When probed, many of the soldiers indicated that they would have been likely to extend or reenlist in the absence of eArmyU. Counselors often corroborated this sentiment; they felt that eArmyU is an additional resource in the reenlistment decision for some soldiers, but probably not the primary or sole reason that they reenlist. At the same time, other soldiers indicated that they specifically reenlisted or extended in order to participate. Still other soldiers reported being outside their reenlistment or extension window but nonetheless below the amount needed to meet the SRR. They said they would have reenlisted or extended at that point if they had been able to do so. If that had happened, the amount by which participants' remaining service obligation exceeded that of analogous nonparticipants would have increased.

## **Duty Performance**

Our analysis looked for evidence of benefits to a soldier's performance of duties through participation in eArmyU. Many focus group participants did indeed report using their laptops to assist them in performing their Army duties. The primary use reported was to help process paperwork, particularly at home after duty hours and, for a smaller number of soldiers, at the home station duty location itself. Some soldiers also reported being able to use their laptops while they were deployed or on TDY to help perform their duties. For junior soldiers or those in more combat-oriented specialties, the eArmyU

laptop may be the only computer that is readily available to them at their duty location or at home. A few soldiers or supervisors reported improved duty performance from the content of the eArmyU classes or from participation itself, and some from familiarization with the computer. However, this was less typical. Supervisors in general were supportive of continued education, and did not report significant interference of eArmyU participation with duty performance.

## **Quality of Life**

We also assessed potential quality-of-life benefits from eArmyU participation. We found that many focus group participants reported using their eArmyU laptops and ISP routinely for personal uses. This included getting work done while spending more time with their family, getting information through the internet, staying in touch with family members or friends, and helping to provide computer access to other members of their family. Soldiers reported that their family members used the laptops for recreation, schooling, and employment.

Some focus group members reported the laptop being important when they were traveling for the Army or when they were on leave. As before, the laptop was used both for personal needs and for work done locally on the laptop as well as on the internet.

## **What Soldiers Value Most About eArmyU and Areas for Improvement<sup>3</sup>**

### **What Is Valued Most**

In the focus groups, we asked a variety of questions to help us understand what soldiers value the most about eArmyU. They told us first and foremost that flexibility is the key, helping them to fit in their

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<sup>3</sup> Additional comments from the Education Center staff focus group discussions are provided in Appendix D.

continuing education around their duties, family time, field training, and other obligations. The tuition assistance was also rated as being extremely important, as were the free books and delivery. Many soldiers told us that the laptop was critical or very important to their participation; others used their own computers. We did hear some complaints about maintenance problems or about laptop quality given what soldiers believed could be purchased today for a similar price. For related reasons, some soldiers reported upgrading their laptop's software or, less often, hardware. Many soldiers reported that the laptop came in handy while on travel because of its portability.

### **Mixed Reviews for Some Program Aspects**

Focus group members disagreed about the value of the ISP. Many soldiers already have their own ISP, DSL, or cable service. Compared to the Army-supplied ISP, DSL or cable gives soldiers a faster connection to participate in eArmyU and otherwise use the internet. However, the ISP provision is often important for junior soldiers in the barracks. Soldiers also told us that the amount they are required to use the ISP varies by course; some courses are extremely interactive in their requirements, whereas others allow periodic downloads of information with local execution of the work, which is uploaded upon completion. Most soldiers did report that the ISP was helpful during travel, however.

The breadth of schools and credit interchangeability under eArmyU were reported to be helpful for some degree areas. For most soldiers, printers were not an important incentive. However, there were some soldiers who did value them, particularly those soldiers who like to print documents for reference purposes rather than having to read them online. The printers are no longer provided under the current eArmyU program.

Reports on the internet interface—the “portal”<sup>4</sup>—were mixed. This portal allows students to access one website to manage all of

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<sup>4</sup> eArmyU centers around an online education portal where students can access and complete courses at any time or place, enabling them to continue their studies through schedule or

their eArmyU records. Soldiers generally said that it had improved, compared to what it had been in the past, but was still not as user friendly or up to date—for example, in keeping track of soldiers' credits—as it might be. When data in the portal were incomplete or out of date, soldiers reported that they had difficulties in administrative functions such as changing schools or participation agreements, both of which are touted as advantages of the portal. There also were mixed reports regarding eArmyU mentoring and helpdesk usefulness; many of the focus group participants believe that the services could be improved if soldiers could use email for these contacts.

A number of issues were raised concerning the potential to reduce soldiers' tuition costs by using other attendance-based or online programs. Other courses were sometimes reported to cost much less than eArmyU courses, for bachelor through graduate level. However, these reports do not consider a variety of factors. For example, they do not include the cost of most of the other eArmyU features that distinguish it from other online programs (such as textbooks, ISP, and integrated online services). Second, getting and transferring credits from one school to another was reported to be more problematic outside eArmyU. This could result in having to take additional courses or, conceivably, retake courses, and that would raise tuition costs. Another report was that courses were more likely to be limited outside of eArmyU, and that some courses might require an upfront payment. Overall, soldiers' comments made it clear that more information about other courses, and particularly other online courses, would be useful.

In making these types of comparisons between eArmyU and other programs, there are costs and opportunities that need to be considered. First, we must decide which highly valued features of eArmyU are absent from other programs and account for their costs. Another issue, noted above, is the cost of any additional courses that might be required outside of eArmyU due to transferability or credit issues. Next, a number of the soldiers noted that withdrawing the lap-

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location changes. The portal is a "virtual doorway" that is a single point of entry to all the participating schools as well as library, helpdesk, and academic records.

tops may not be as cost-free to the Army as it might first appear. For example, the Army would need to monitor approved computer room use on posts and ensure that the computers are functioning; this could incur additional costs. Other soldiers raised the issue of whether the eArmyU laptop and ISP could be used to facilitate completing current noncommissioned officer (NCO) courses online or with CDs or to access Army Knowledge Online (AKO) accounts in ways that might reduce other technology costs to the Army. To compensate for the autonomous nature of the eArmyU program, many participating schools require proctored tests. The opportunities to take these tests varied by post. Since taking proctored tests requires additional funding, any differences in the proctoring requirements of eArmyU courses as compared to other courses would need to be considered. Last, there are potential opportunity costs of not providing a laptop for the quality of life of the soldier and for duty performance; these need to be considered outright as well as with respect to their financial implications.

### **Recoupment Issues**

Focus group participants raised a number of recoupment issues. We separate these into procedural issues versus matters of qualification for eArmyU participation.

**Procedural issues.** Soldiers told us that the procedures to avoid recoupment are not always clear. They also wondered whether on-site, in-person help for disenrollment might be useful, to help them disenroll within the regulations and avoid later recoupment actions. Soldiers and supervisors also indicated that getting the letters and signatures required to avoid recoupment is not always an easy matter. They reported that unit support for education varies, and that the support level can contribute to soldiers' later requirement for recoupment actions. A consistent report was that there is a great deal of variability in cooperation and responsiveness across schools, and among professors within schools, in working with soldiers to meet their legitimate needs for flexibility in completing their course requirements due to military obligations. Some courses, for example, require logons at fixed times; this is difficult for many soldiers. Some



soldiers also reported that when they experienced a delay in getting a laptop, this was not factored into their course completion date requirements.

Supervisors raised the issue of not getting feedback on the progress of their soldiers as they go along in the program, prior to the need for any recoupment actions. Many supervisors believe that getting that information would help them work with the soldiers, detect possible trouble, and avert it. Supervisors may be unaware that a soldier is enrolled in eArmyU at all, and commonly they are not informed about how many courses a soldier has completed, how many more are required, or whether a soldier is enrolled in a course at a particular time. This information gap can be problematic. One example is a soldier enrolling in a course when a unit may be about to deploy, leaving him unable to complete it. A supervisor could help the soldier decide whether it is a good time for enrollment.

There was also discussion of connectivity issues. One of the more frequent issues that emerged was that in Korea, senior soldiers could connect for eArmyU courses reasonably well, but junior soldiers had much more difficulty due to their more limited access to phone lines.

**Qualification requirements.** A number of issues were raised concerning potential qualification requirements for eArmyU participation that could help contribute to successful participation and decrease recoupment. These included having a minimum aptitude level (general technical (GT) score) and reading grade level requirement, and the need to enforce those standards. Commanders can currently override the counselor in enrolling soldiers in eArmyU who do not meet these criteria. Soldiers and supervisors as well as Education Center staff also believe that eArmyU enrollees should have the proven ability to complete college courses. This could require prior completion of attendance-based classes, online classes, or both. Another prerequisite might be demonstrated computer literacy, through a placement test or, if necessary, by completing a computer literacy course as the first course taken under eArmyU.

Participants noted that meeting eArmyU requirements was more difficult for some MOSs than others, for example, because of greater

field obligations, hours, deployments, and so forth. Many soldiers believe that junior soldiers need Army experience to understand their military job requirements and, thus, that they should be required to obtain a minimum of that experience before being permitted to enroll in eArmyU. Regarding the Order of Merit List procedure, some of the installations reported that using the OMLs was producing a more senior mix of eArmyU participants. In general, there were mixed feelings across sites, and among soldiers and education staff at a given site, about the desirability of using an OML procedure for eArmyU enrollments and the consequences of doing so. Another issue raised in discussions about avoiding recoupment was that the Army could require some upfront charge to discourage soldiers from enrolling in eArmyU who either were not serious about taking classes or were enrolling primarily to get the laptop. This might be accompanied by reimbursement of those charges later, upon successful course completion.

## **Recommendations**

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This chapter discusses our recommendations. They are couched in terms of broad Army goals for providing education programs to soldiers. The goals are as follows:

- Increase the enlisted force's access to education opportunities.
- Constrain eArmyU costs per soldier while facilitating access.
- Minimize a soldier's risk of recoupment in eArmyU.

### **Increase the Enlisted Force's Access to Education Opportunities**

We begin with the Army's broad goal of increasing the enlisted force's access to education opportunities. For eArmyU, this means opening the program to enrollments at more sites and, eventually, at all posts. To extend eArmyU on an equitable basis, we recommend that the Army consider basing new enrollment allocations on a post's E4–E9 population less the number of current enrollees in eArmyU. Focus group responses lead us to suggest E4 as the base qualification for soldiers in accordance with the earlier point about soldiers needing a certain amount of experience to understand the Army lifestyle, their duty obligations, and, thus, the feasibility of their meeting the course requirements under eArmyU. After discussions with the Education Center staffs across the current sites, we suggest that the Army agree on and enforce OML or other qualification-based procedures for the E4–E9s to be permitted to fill slots made available to their

posts for eArmyU. The eArmyU program should keep its core features that distinguish it from other continuing education opportunities. These include tuition assistance, books, and the portal, the features most valued by the soldiers. And, to avoid constraining participation among junior soldiers or those with financial challenges, the program should include options for an Army-funded laptop and ISP.

### **Constrain eArmyU Costs per Soldier While Facilitating Access**

The second broad goal is to constrain eArmyU costs per soldier to facilitate the increased enlisted access to the program. This should include reviewing the reported difference in cost to the Army of eArmyU courses compared with other online courses, especially at the same or similar educational institutions, and reducing differences as feasible.

We recommend that the Army offer soldiers more options that increase the flexibility of the program in ways the soldiers value while at the same time controlling the cost of participation per soldier for the Army. Given a laptop-optional program, this could include encouraging soldiers not to take the laptop and ISP features if they are unnecessary by reducing the SRR and semester hour requirements should they choose not to take those features. At the same time, such soldiers' course eligibility under eArmyU should remain analogous to that of soldiers taking the laptop. This means three years of eligibility (or eligibility until their ETS date if that is fewer than three years after enrollment). Similarly, soldiers could be discouraged from taking technology features they do not need by asking them to share their costs. One mechanism for accomplishing such cost sharing is by inclusion of the technology package in the tuition cap, as is currently being done. The impact of including the cost of the technology package in the tuition cap on more advanced students who need to take more expensive courses could be addressed by considering graduated caps on the tuition assistance value. This could be based on the costs

for different degrees or courses, with the cap increasing as one moves from an AA degree to a BA to graduate courses. Requiring an initial co-payment could also discourage taking unneeded features. That co-payment could be modeled after the co-payment for the Army College Fund, but at a reduced rate given the lower per-capita cost of the eArmyU program. For example, soldiers might be asked to contribute \$50 from their monthly paycheck for six months. This would mean they were contributing \$300 to the cost of the laptop, with the Army contributing approximately \$1,000.

The Army could also facilitate continuity of education while controlling costs by improving the transferability of credits from other online programs to eArmyU or from eArmyU to those institutions, without requiring additional courses. Smoother transferability would result in fewer lost credits and would lighten the resulting courseload requirements needed to satisfy a different educational institution. Another way to reduce costs is to reduce the need for recoupment actions, which often result in the Army incurring costs through waivers or, if not waived, through collection costs.

### **Minimize a Soldier's Risk of Recoupment in eArmyU**

A third broad goal should be to minimize a soldier's risk of recoupment in eArmyU. As part of this goal, the Army would ensure that soldiers are given realistic and thorough information about eArmyU upfront, including the challenges as well as the opportunities provided by the program. This information can be provided by a combination of counselors, students, and supervisors. Related to this point, the Army should work to ensure sufficient connectivity for participation in the program across sites and pay grades. Where there are known connectivity issues, they should be published so that soldiers are aware of them. The Army could work to improve the responsiveness of participating schools and professors to soldiers' legitimate needs for flexibility due to training, deployment, and fulfillment of other military obligations.

Another objective would be to enhance supervisors' and the Education Center staff's ability to track soldiers' progress through the program, to enable them to work with the soldiers to avoid the need for later recoupment actions. According to soldiers, the Army could clarify the procedures to avoid recoupment and get legitimate extensions, and could facilitate necessary disenrollments, including the possibility of disenrolling either locally or online.

The Army could help reduce prospective recoupments by establishing and enforcing prerequisites to enhance the prospects for success among enrollees. These could include: a GT score and reading grade level minimum; a proven ability to complete college courses in the past or the required completion of an initial attendance-based class, online class, or both; and a placement test to demonstrate computer literacy or, failing that, a required computer literacy course at the beginning of the eArmyU enrollment. Also important is requiring some minimum time in service or a minimum pay grade—for example, E4—to ensure that the soldier is familiar with military obligations and lifestyle and, thus, understands the feasibility of meeting the eArmyU course requirements. Ill-advised enrollments might also be decreased by requiring a limited initial co-payment. The amount of that co-payment should be determined based on affordability, and it could apply to taking the laptop technology package, as noted, to course enrollment, or to both.

## Focus Group Protocols

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NOTE: The protocols presented here represent the most complete version of those used. Subsets of these questions were used at different sites depending on the program option at the site (laptop, no-laptop, or choice).

### Participating Students

#### Introduction/Oral Consent

Hello. My name is XX and this is YY. We are researchers at RAND, which is a nonprofit research organization. We're working with the Army to better understand the use and value of the eArmyU program. You are here today because you participate in eArmyU. Your input is very valuable to understanding the program and how to make it most useful to you.

We have a few ground rules to help make everyone comfortable today. First, I'll be asking some questions and listening to your answers for the next 60 minutes. Please provide your honest opinions. All your answers are correct—your opinions and thoughts are what have value for us. The information you are providing probably doesn't seem too private to you, but we still want to assure you that we will maintain your confidentiality. We won't attribute comments to you individually, nor will your names be released as a part of this project. We also ask everyone in the room to keep the discussion held here in private.

Taking part today is voluntary. You should feel free to skip any questions that you prefer not to answer, or to stop entirely if you prefer to do so. However, your opinions are important to us and we hope you will participate today.

Do you agree to participate in this focus group?

### **Questions**

1. What are your goals in eArmyU and why did you decide to participate?

#### **Possible probes:**

- a. Friends/family encouragement
  - b. Expected from someone
  - c. Career aspirations within or outside of Army
2. Please tell us the things that first come to your mind about eArmyU. These can be positive or negative things.
  3. How long have you been in eArmyU? How many courses have you taken? How many courses are you taking now? How many do you plan to take? Do the minimum credit hour requirements work for you?
  4. Today we specifically need to talk about the following elements: the laptop, the ISP, tuition and books, and the service remaining requirement. We're not entirely limited to these topics, but you will hear us focusing on these as we go through the session.

### **LAPTOP QUESTIONS**

Let's start with the laptop. On each of these topics, we're essentially interested in how you use the item and how important it is to your participation in eArmyU.

5. Which option did you select—the laptop or no laptop?



**Yes Laptop**

6. Why did you select the laptop?
7. How important is the laptop to you on a scale of 0 to 10? Do you need the laptop to participate in eArmyU? Why/why not? Would you be able to achieve your goals in eArmyU without the laptop? Why/why not? What type of impact would it have on your coursework to not have the laptop?
8. What software came with the laptop? What software have you added, if any, and why?

**No Laptop**

9. Why didn't you select the laptop?
10. What kind of computer are you using to participate in eArmyU (laptop or desktop)?
11. Is this working well for you? Do you find that you have adequate access to this computer? Have you had any logistical issues with using this computer? How is the interface with the eArmyU portal working?
12. Did you receive the software you needed? How has it worked for you?

**All**

13. You're fairly new to the program, but so far have you found yourself using the computer outside of school at all? How?

**Possible probes:**

- a. In performing your duties? How frequently do you use it; how important is the laptop to the tasks you do with it?
- b. Has the laptop had any other impacts on your readiness? Example?

c. Do you use the laptop in everyday activities other than coursework or duty requirements? How? How much do you use it? How much do you value this ability?

14. Does your family use the laptop in their everyday life activities? How?

**Possible probes:**

- a. How much do you value this ability?
- b. What type of impact would it have on your life and your family's life to not have the laptop?

15. Please tell us about your perceptions of computer access in other places. For example, could you use a computer on post? How easy is it to do this?

16. Have you been deployed or on a field exercise since you enrolled in eArmyU—or are you about to be? (If have been in field) Were you able to continue your studies during the deployment and, if so, how important was having the laptop in doing so? Have you incurred any costs? Did you have to get a letter to change status (extend or withdraw)? Were you clear about the procedures for this?

**ISP QUESTIONS**

Let's move on to the internet service provider (ISP). We're interested in your thoughts on the value of the Army providing free ISP access to you.

17. How important is the free Army ISP (Fiberlink) access to you on a scale of 0 to 10? Do you need ISP access provided to you to participate in eArmyU? Why/why not? Would you be able to achieve what you want to through eArmyU without the free ISP? Why/why not? What type of impact would it have on your coursework to not have the ISP provided to you?

18. What about outside of school? How do you use the ISP access?

**Possible probes:**

- a. In performing your duties? How frequently do you use it and how important is having the ISP access to the tasks you do with it?
- b. Has the ISP access had any other impacts on your readiness? Would you give us an example?
- c. Do you use the ISP access in everyday activities other than coursework or duty requirements? How? How much do you use it? How much do you value this ability?

19. Does your family use the ISP access in their everyday life activities? How?

**Possible probes:**

- a. How much do you value this ability?
- b. What type of impact would it have on your life and your family's life to not have the ISP access?

20. If the Army offered the option to participate in eArmyU without providing the free ISP access for a reduced course commitment and SRR, would you do so? Please talk more about this.

21. Please tell us about your perceptions of ISP access in other places. Can you use a computer with ISP access on post? How easy is it to do this?

**Possible probe:**

- a. What about other locations, do you have access?

22. We've talked about the Army-provided laptop and ISP and asked how you used these for duty preparedness or improved quality of life. If you said yes, that you do, is the Army equipment the key to this use, or would you have been able to do these things anyway?

**OTHER SUPPORTED COSTS (E.G., TUITION, BOOKS, FEES) QUESTIONS**

A new Department of Defense policy introduced on October 1, 2002 provides soldiers with up to 100% tuition assistance in any approved education program of the soldiers' choice, not just eArmyU, up to a cap of \$250 per semester hour and \$4,500 per year. With this new policy, the main features of eArmyU that other online education programs do not have are:

**Features**

- Access to more than 90 online programs, from 21 colleges and universities, credits fully transferable.
- Up to 100% funding for books, fees, email account, and internet provider.
- Provides fully funded personal laptop computer and 24/7 help desk.
- All participating schools must provide maximum award of credit for military training and experience and tests (such as the College Level Examination Program—CLEP).
- Integrated online one-stop shop for all services from all schools: common application and registration forms, customized degree map and tracking, integrated searchable catalog, library, unlimited tutoring, and academic advisement.

**Requirements**

- Service remaining requirement (SRR) of 3 years, through current obligation, extension, or reenlistment for the laptop option; and one year for the no-laptop option.
- Completion of at least 12 semester hours (about 4 courses) during the first two years of enrollment for the laptop option; and 3 semester hours (one course) in one year for the no-laptop option.

23. You've just signed up for eArmyU. Were you aware of the changes to tuition reimbursement? If not, now that you know that you would receive up to full tuition in any program you took, would you still choose eArmyU? Why or why not? Online courses?

24. Please rank the following items in terms of how important they are to your participation:
  - a. Tuition assistance
  - b. Laptop
  - c. Free books/delivery
  - d. One-stop portal
  - e. Maximum credit for military training
25. What costs, if any, do you experience as part of participating in eArmyU?

#### **SRR AND COURSELOAD QUESTIONS**

To participate in the traditional eArmyU program, you are required to meet the 3-year service remaining requirement of the program, by extending your service obligation or reenlisting if necessary. In this pilot, if you choose the no-laptop option, you have a one-year SRR. Let's talk about this.

##### **No Laptop**

26. Starting with those of you who chose the no-laptop option, how did the lower SRR factor into your decision?

##### **Laptop**

27. For those of you who chose the laptop, did you need to extend your service obligation to satisfy the 3-year SRR? Did you extend or reenlist? For how long? Would you have reenlisted/extended anyway?

##### **All**

28. Let's talk about potential formulations of the SRR and eArmyU. What combination of SRR/course requirements would you prefer?

##### **Possible probes:**

- a. How helpful would you find it if the SRR was 2 years to match the 12 credit hour requirement?

- b. What if the credit hour requirement was extended to three years, and the SRR remained at 3 years? Would you prefer this?
  - c. What about 6 credit hours and 1 year? 3 credit hours and 1 year?
  - d. No laptop and reduced SRR? What SRR?
  - e. Other?
29. Suppose that because of the need to match students' computer hardware and software configurations to eArmyU's specific on-line features, you needed to purchase the laptop with software at a discounted rate of about \$1,350. Would you participate in eArmyU? Why or why not?

**Wrap-up**

30. Overall, how much does your participation in eArmyU influence your decision to stay in the Army? Why/why not?
31. Thank you for your input on the specific aspects of the program. Let's return to a few big-picture questions. What if anything are we missing about this program? What haven't we asked that you think is important to know?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND THOUGHTS.**

## **Supervisors**

### **Introduction/Oral Consent**

Hello. My name is XX and this is YY. We are researchers at RAND, which is a nonprofit research organization. We're working with the Army to better understand the use and value of the eArmyU program. You are here today because you supervise people who participate in eArmyU. Your input is very valuable to understanding the program and how to make it most effective for the Army.

We have a few ground rules to help make everyone comfortable today. First, I'll be asking some questions and listening to your answers for the next 30 minutes. Please provide your honest opinions. All your answers are correct—your opinions and thoughts are what have value for us. The information you are providing probably doesn't seem that private to you, but we still want to assure you that we will maintain your confidentiality. We won't attribute comments to you individually, nor will your names be released as a part of this project. We also ask everyone in the room to keep the discussion held here in private.

Taking part today is voluntary. You should feel free to skip any questions that you prefer not to answer, or to stop entirely if you prefer to do so. However, your opinions are important to us and we hope you will participate today.

Do you agree to participate in this research interview?

### **Introduction**

To start, I'd like to provide some background on the eArmyU program.

The Army is implementing a program for its soldiers known as eArmyU.

### **Features**

- Earn credits and degrees at low/no cost while serving on active duty.
- Access to more than 90 online programs, from 21 colleges and universities, credits fully transferable.
- Up to 100% funding for tuition, books, fees, email account, and internet provider.
- All participating schools must provide maximum award of credit for military training and experience and tests (such as the College Level Examination Program—CLEP).
- Integrated online one-stop shop for all services from all schools: common application and registration forms, customized degree map and tracking, integrated searchable catalog, library, unlimited tutoring, and academic advisement.

### **Requirements**

- Service remaining requirement (SRR) of 3 years, through current obligation, extension, or reenlistment.
- Completion of at least 12 semester hours (about 4 courses) during the first two years of enlistment.

Are there any questions on the program?

### **Questions**

1. Let's talk about continuing education and the professional development of soldiers. Would you talk about your thoughts about soldiers continuing their education while on active duty?
2. We'd like to also hear your thoughts about eArmyU specifically. How aware are you of the program? How well do you understand the details of eArmyU versus other educational programs? Do you have enough information about the program?
3. What are the characteristics of soldiers you see having the most success?



4. What effects, if any, do you think that participating in eArmyU will have on the soldiers you supervise in their work duties?

**Possible probes:**

- a. How will this affect their knowledge at work?
  - b. Will it take up their free time and cause them stress?
  - c. Is it different for eArmyU than for other educational programs? If so, why?
5. Considering everything we've discussed, what are the elements that you think will contribute most to improved readiness? This can include improved performance, quality of life, or likelihood of staying in the Army.
  6. What effect, if any, do you think eArmyU would have on the work of the soldiers you supervise if they were given a laptop as part of the program?

**Possible probes:**

- a. Do soldiers use their personal computers in their duty requirements? How?
  - b. Please estimate the average amount of time soldiers use their personal computers for duty requirements.
7. Optional: Are you aware of the OML/screening procedures? What is your impression of how this is working? Would you make any changes?<sup>1</sup>
  8. Do you have any other thoughts to share? Are we missing anything about the program that is important for us to know?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND THOUGHTS.**

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<sup>1</sup> Asked of supervisors involved in the OML screening process.

## **Administrators**

### **Introduction/Oral Consent**

Hello. My name is XX and this is YY. We are researchers at RAND, which is a nonprofit research organization. We're working with the Army to better understand the use and value of the eArmyU program. You are here today because you are a program administrator for eArmyU. Your input is very valuable to us in understanding the program and how to make it most effective for the Army.

We have a few ground rules to help make everyone comfortable today. First, I'll be asking some questions and listening to your answers for the next 45 minutes. Please provide your honest opinions. All your answers are correct—your opinions and thoughts are what have value for us. The information you are providing probably doesn't seem that private to you, but we still want to assure you that we will maintain your confidentiality. We won't attribute comments to you individually, nor will your names be released as a part of this project. We also ask everyone in the room to keep the discussion held here in private.

Taking part today is voluntary. You should feel free to skip any questions that you prefer not to answer, or to stop entirely if you prefer to do so. However, your opinions are important to us and we hope you will participate today.

Do you agree to participate in this focus group?

### **Questions**

We're trying to understand how eArmyU could be structured to make it most effective for students, most efficient for you, and also cost-effective for the Army. We're interested in your thoughts in all these areas.

1. Let's start by having you tell us about your role in eArmyU.

#### **Possible probes:**

- a. Is your job 100% dedicated to administering the eArmyU program? If not, please estimate the percentage of time that you spend on eArmyU.

- b. Please describe the work that you do as an administrator of eArmyU. Please think about any big-picture issues (strategy setting, long-term planning) as well as daily tasks.
  2. We are interested in hearing how things are going with respect to the procedures now in place for the pilot test. Were you ready to go by January 27? What has taken more time to get going and why? How many people have you been able to enroll?
  3. What are soldiers saying about the option of laptop or no laptop? What are the take-rates?
  4. What are the details of your OML procedure? How is the OML working for you? Is the OML affecting who and how many soldiers are enrolling, and if so, why?
  5. Before this OML process began, how did you previously choose whom to permit to enroll at your base? Would you describe the pros and cons of your old method versus the OML?
  6. Are you being affected by deployments? In what ways, and what do you anticipate over the next few months?
  7. For you as an administrator, what do you see as the best benefit of being an eArmyU implementation site to your location?
- Possible probe:**
- a. Serving a different group of soldiers, visibility, commander involvement?
  8. What have been the biggest obstacles to overcome in the administration of the program at your location? Why? What is the easiest part of your job? Why?
  9. How well do you think the enrollment process works? Would you modify the enrollment process if you could? How?

10. How long does it take to process a new student through the enrollment steps and issue a Participation Agreement?
11. How long do interested soldiers typically take to return their PA to you? How long to enroll in their first course?

**Possible probe:**

- a. If returning the PAs or enrolling takes a long time, do you have a good sense of why they are delayed?
12. What about a waitlist? Is there one?

**Possible probe:**

- a. If yes: What would cause a soldier to be placed on the waitlist instead of being enrolled? How many soldiers wind up on the waitlist relative to actual enrollments? How long do students typically spend on the waitlist?
13. Would you modify the waitlist process if you could? How? Why?

The next two are questions that ACES [Army Continuing Education Services] HQ wanted to make sure were included:

14. Do most students manage the technological setup of their eArmyU equipment fairly well? If you are aware of problems in this area, do soldiers know the process to resolve them? Are there ways to improve this process?
15. Was the site setup guidance in the implementation plan sufficient to assist in developing your local procedures? What other implementation issues are there? In setup? In maintenance? Did you have adequate training materials to support your implementation? Sustainment?

16. With what issues do participating soldiers seek your help? Can the issues be categorized to give us an idea of how much of your time it takes to resolve them? Do you find students understand your role, that is, what you can do for them?
17. What do you think motivates students to enroll in eArmyU? What is a disincentive to enrolling? What do soldiers like and dislike the most about eArmyU?
18. What soldiers are most successful in eArmyU? What characteristics lead to success?

**Possible probe:**

- a. (If the administrator did not mention the computer, ISP access, and SRR:) What kinds of comments have you heard from students about the computer, ISP access, including connectivity issues? SRR?
19. What about your interaction with the ACES counselors (or contractors)? Is interaction regular, easy, sufficient?
20. Overall, what is the best or most effective aspect of eArmyU? What have you seen cause failure in the program?
21. If you could structure the program with the different elements, how would you? Who would get in and who wouldn't, what would the entrance requirements be?
22. If you had the choice between offering eArmyU and not, which would you choose and why?
23. Do you have any other thoughts to share? Are we missing anything about the program that you would like to comment on? Is there anything else that is important for us to know?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND THOUGHTS.**

## **Army Education Survey**

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The following pages are facsimiles of the survey fielded to 8,000 enlisted soldiers as a part of this study, as described in Chapter One.

SURVEY APPROVAL AUTHORITY: U.S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SURVEY CONTROL NUMBER: TAPC-ARI-AO-03-04

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# ARMY EDUCATION SURVEY

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**JANUARY 2003**

DA FORM 7481(ONE TIME), JAN 03.

\* U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE:2002-496 714-5002R  
247501-1

# Army Education Survey

The Army asked RAND to develop the enclosed survey concerning your educational and career aspirations. Your responses will provide information about how the Army can best serve you with education programs. The results will be collected and analyzed by researchers at RAND, a non-profit research organization committed to improving public policy.

## NOTICE

- 1. READ CAREFULLY EACH QUESTION AND ALL THE POSSIBLE RESPONSES** before selecting your response.
- 2. DO NOT FOLD, TEAR, CUT, TRIM, STAPLE OR TAPE CLOSED, OR PLACE A LABEL ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.**
- 3. THE SURVEY IS ANONYMOUS.** The survey is anonymous because your responses will not be tracked back to you. Only persons involved in collecting or preparing the information for analysis will have access to completed survey questionnaires. Only group statistics will be reported.
- 4. PROVIDE YOUR BACKGROUND INFORMATION.** The information asked in the section "Demographic Information for Summarizing Survey Results" on page 7 is essential for analyzing the data. Please answer these questions.
- 5. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED.** The Army needs information from you in order to make informed decisions. Failure to respond to any question will not result in any penalty. However, your participation is encouraged so that the data will be complete and representative of all soldiers.
- 6. USE THE RETURN ENVELOPE.** After you have completed the survey, please place the questionnaire in the envelope provided, seal the envelope, and return it to your local point-of-contact (POC). The envelope is provided to help protect your privacy.

Prepared by RAND in coordination with:

ARMY PERSONNEL SURVEY OFFICE  
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## MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Please use a No. 2 pencil.



- Make heavy black marks that fill the circle for your answer.
- Please do not make stray marks of any kind.

#### INCORRECT MARKS



#### CORRECT MARK



#### Marking all that apply

Sometimes you will be asked to "MARK ALL THAT APPLY." When this instruction appears, you may mark more than one answer.

##### EXAMPLE:

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin or ancestry (of any race)?

#### MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

- ☐ No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ancestry
- ☒ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- ☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
- ☐ Yes, Cuban
- ☒ Yes, other Hispanic /Spanish

#### Selecting only one response

Sometimes you will be asked to mark one response from a list of possible items.

##### EXAMPLE:

How important is it to you to reach this highest level of education?

#### MARK ONLY ONE.

- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☒ Moderately important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Extremely important

#### Marking numbers

Sometimes you will be asked to give numbers for your answer by filling in a grid. If you are asked to give numbers, please record the numbers in the boxes along side the grid, then fill in the circles of the grid as shown below.

EXAMPLE: How many years of Active Federal Military Service (AFMS) have you completed? COUNT TIME IN CURRENT TOUR AND TIME IN PREVIOUS TOURS OR SERVICES.

2	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA



SERIAL #



### A. Education Background and Preferences

PLEASE MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER TO EACH QUESTION.

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Some high school or less, but no diploma, certificate, or GED  
☐ High school diploma or GED  
☐ From 1 to 2 years of college, but no degree  
☐ Associate degree  
☐ From 3 to 4 years of college, but no degree  
☐ Bachelor's degree  
☐ A year or more of graduate credit, but no graduate degree  
☐ Master's degree  
☐ Doctorate degree  
☐ Professional degree, such as MD, DDS, or JD

2. What is the highest level of education you eventually hope to complete?

☐ Some high school or less, but no diploma, certificate, or GED  
☐ High school diploma or GED  
☐ From 1 to 2 years of college, but no degree  
☐ Associate degree  
☐ From 3 to 4 years of college, but no degree  
☐ Bachelor's degree  
☐ A year or more of graduate credit, but no graduate degree  
☐ Master's degree  
☐ Doctorate degree  
☐ Professional degree, such as MD, DDS, or JD

3. How important is it to you to reach this highest level of education?

☐ Not at all important  
☐ Slightly important  
☐ Moderately important  
☐ Very important  
☐ Extremely important

4. How important is it to you to continue your civilian education while in the Army?

☐ Not at all important  
☐ Slightly important  
☐ Moderately important  
☐ Very important  
☐ Extremely important

5. How much responsibility do you feel the Army should have in helping you to complete the education you desire through educational programs or financial assistance?

☐ No responsibility  
☐ Minor responsibility  
☐ Medium responsibility  
☐ Major responsibility  
☐ Entire responsibility

6. Are you currently continuing your education/attending college or planning to continue your formal education?

☐ Yes, I am currently continuing my education  
☐ Yes, I plan to enroll soon  
☐ Yes, I plan to enroll after I leave active duty  
☐ No  
☐ Undecided

7. What is the highest level of education your mother completed?

☐ Some high school or less, but no diploma, certificate, or GED  
☐ High school diploma or GED  
☐ From 1 to 2 years of college, but no degree  
☐ Associate degree  
☐ From 3 to 4 years of college, but no degree  
☐ Bachelor's degree  
☐ A year or more of graduate credit, but no graduate degree  
☐ Master's degree  
☐ Doctorate degree  
☐ Professional degree, such as MD, DDS, or JD  
☐ Don't know

## B. Career Intentions, Military and Civilian

PLEASE MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER TO EACH QUESTION.

1. How much time is remaining in your current term of service?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 year or more, but less than 2 years
- ☐ 2 years or more, but less than 3 years
- ☐ 3 years or more

2. How likely are you to extend your current term of service or to re-enlist after completing your current term?  
Marking 0% means that you are sure that you will *not* extend or re-enlist; marking 100% means you are sure that you will extend or re-enlist.

Definitely Not → 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ← Definitely Yes

☐ I am currently serving on an Indefinite enlistment period

3. How likely are you to stay in the Army until military retirement?

Definitely Not → 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ← Definitely Yes

4. How important do you think it is for you to obtain more education in order to be competitive for a good civilian job?

- ☐ Not important at all
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Extremely important

5. How important do you think it is for you to obtain more education in order to be competitive for your military career?

- ☐ Not important at all
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Extremely important

6. If you left the Army, how difficult do you think it would be for you to find a good civilian job?

- ☐ Very difficult
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Neither easy or difficult
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Very easy

7. If you plan to leave the Army before military retirement, what is the primary reason?

- ☐ Amount of pay
- ☐ Amount of time separated from family
- ☐ Overall quality of Army life
- ☐ Promotion/advancement opportunities
- ☐ To continue education
- ☐ Other reason

### C. Computer Use

1. How confident are you in your capability to complete an on-line education or training course for credit over the Internet? MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- ☐ Not at all confident  
☐ Slightly confident  
☐ Moderately confident  
☐ Very confident  
☐ Extremely confident

2. How do you feel about taking classes online versus taking a class in an actual classroom setting? MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER.

- ☐ Much prefer classroom setting  
☐ Somewhat prefer classroom setting  
☐ No preference  
☐ Somewhat prefer online classes  
☐ Much prefer online classes

3. Do you currently have access to a computer? MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

- ☐ Yes, at home, barracks, or quarters  
☐ Yes, at work or work unit  
☐ Yes, at a training classroom  
☐ Yes, at another accessible location  
☐ No

### D. eArmyU

The Army is implementing a program for its soldiers known as eArmyU

#### Features

- Earn credits and degrees at low/no cost while serving on active duty
- Access to more than 90 online programs, from 21 colleges and universities, credits fully transferrable
- Up to 100% funding for tuition, books, fees, e-mail account, and Internet provider
- Provides fully funded personal laptop computer and 24/7 helpdesk
- All participating schools must provide maximum award of credit for military training and experience and tests (such as the College Level Examination Program—CLEP)
- Integrated online one-stop shop for all services from all schools: common application and registration forms, customized degree map and tracking, integrated searchable catalog, library, unlimited tutoring, and academic advisement

#### Requirements

- Service Remaining Requirement (SRR) of 3 years, through current obligation, extension, or reenlistment
- Completion of at least 12 semester hours (about 4 courses) during the first 2 years of enrollment

PLEASE MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER TO EACH QUESTION.

1. If eArmyU were made available to you, how likely is it that you would participate? MARK THE CIRCLE FOR ONLY ONE NUMBER, OR FILL IN THE CIRCLE "ALREADY PARTICIPATING."

Definitely Not → 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ← Definitely Yes

☐ Already participating in eArmyU

PLEASE MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER TO EACH QUESTION.

2. How likely would you be to extend your current term of service or reenlist in return for participating in eArmyU? MARK THE CIRCLE FOR ONLY ONE NUMBER, OR FILL IN THE CIRCLE "ALREADY EXTENDED/REENLISTED."

Definitely Not → 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ← Definitely Yes

☐ Already extended/reenlisted to participate in eArmy U

3. Do you need the free laptop to participate in eArmyU?

- ☐ No, could participate reasonably well in eArmyU without the free laptop  
☐ No, but the free laptop helps greatly  
☐ Yes, cannot participate without it

A new DoD policy implemented on October 1, 2002 provides soldiers with 100% tuition assistance up to \$250 per semester hour and \$4,500 each fiscal year in *any* approved education program of the soldiers' choice, not just eArmyU. With this new policy, the main characteristics of eArmyU that distinguish it from other online education programs are:

Features

- Access to more than 90 online programs, from 21 colleges and universities, credits fully transferable
- Up to 100% funding for books, fees, e-mail account, and Internet provider
- Provides fully funded personal laptop computer and 24/7 help desk
- All participating schools must provide maximum award of credit for military training and experience and tests (such as the College Level Examination Program—CLEP)
- Integrated online one-stop shop for all services from all schools: common application and registration forms, customized degree map and tracking, integrated searchable catalog, library, unlimited tutoring, and academic advisement

Requirements

- Service Remaining Requirement (SRR) of 3 years, through current obligation, extension, or reenlistment
- Completion of at least 12 semester hours (about 4 courses) during the first 2 years of enrollment

4. If both eArmyU and other online education programs were available at your site through the Army Education Center, in which of the two would you rather participate?

- ☐ eArmyU  
☐ Other Army Education Center online education program  
☐ Not interested in either one

If eArmyU provided all the features described above *except the laptop*, and, in return, *reduced* its requirements to a 1-year SRR and 3 semester hours (about 1 course) completed in that year:

- 5a. How likely would you be to participate in eArmyU?

Definitely Not → 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ← Definitely Yes

- 5b. How likely would you be to participate in a *different* online education program (*not eArmyU*)?

Definitely Not → 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% ← Definitely Yes



## Supplemental Data

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**Table C.1**  
**Response Distributions for Survey Questions**

Survey Question	Percent
<b>QA1 HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED (N = 4,041)</b>	
SOME HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS/NO DIPLOMA, GED, CERTIFICATE	1.36
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED	55.61
FROM 1 TO 2 YEARS OF COLLEGE, NO DEGREE	30.36
ASSOCIATE DEGREE	4.53
FROM 3 TO 4 YEARS OF COLLEGE, NO DEGREE	3.69
BACHELOR DEGREE	3.34
A YEAR OR MORE GRAD CREDIT, NO DEGREE	0.62
MASTER DEGREE	0.35
DOCTORATE DEGREE	0.05
PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	0.10
<b>QA2 HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION HOPE TO COMPLETE (N = 4,044)</b>	
SOME HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS/NO DIPLOMA, GED, CERTIFICATE	0.42
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED	1.88
FROM 1 TO 2 YEARS OF COLLEGE, NO DEGREE	2.87
ASSOCIATE DEGREE	14.86
FROM 3 TO 4 YEARS OF COLLEGE, NO DEGREE	1.63
BACHELOR DEGREE	44.56
A YEAR OR MORE GRAD CREDIT, NO DEGREE	0.91
MASTER DEGREE	24.43
DOCTORATE DEGREE	4.33
PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	4.10
<b>QA3 IMPORTANCE OF REACHING HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION (N = 4,053)</b>	
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	1.73
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	2.84
MODERATELY IMPORTANT	21.32
VERY IMPORTANT	40.98
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	33.14

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
<b>QA4 IMPORTANCE TO CONTINUE CIVILIAN EDUCATION WHILE IN ARMY (N = 4,063)</b>	
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	5.56
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	8.32
MODERATELY IMPORTANT	22.57
VERY IMPORTANT	35.32
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	28.23
<b>QA5 RESPONSIBILITY OF ARMY TO ASSIST IN COMPLETE EDUCATION (N = 4,058)</b>	
NO RESPONSIBILITY	2.56
MINOR RESPONSIBILITY	5.05
MEDIUM RESPONSIBILITY	28.98
MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY	48.62
ENTIRE RESPONSIBILITY	14.79
<b>QA6 CURRENTLY CONTINUING EDUCATION OR PLANNING TO CONTINUE (N = 4,047)</b>	
YES, CURRENTLY CONTINUING EDUCATION	21.05
YES, PLAN TO ENROLL SOON	39.46
YES, PLAN TO ENROLL AFTER LEAVE ACTIVE SERVICE	20.04
NO	15.64
UNDECIDED	3.81
<b>QA7 MOTHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION (N = 4,036)</b>	
MOTHER COMPLETED/SOME HIGH SCHOOL, NO DIPLOMA	12.41
MOTHER COMPLETED/HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA, GED	37.76
MOTHER COMPLETED/1 TO 2 YEARS COLLEGE, NO DEGREE	12.71
MOTHER COMPLETED/ASSOCIATE DEGREE	9.22
MOTHER COMPLETED/3 TO 4 YEARS COLLEGE, NO DEGREE	2.33
MOTHER COMPLETED/BACHELOR DEGREE	10.53
MOTHER COMPLETED/YEAR OR MORE GRADUATE SCHOOL, NO DEGREE	0.99
MOTHER COMPLETED/MASTER DEGREE	5.65
MOTHER COMPLETED/DOCTORATE DEGREE	0.62
MOTHER COMPLETED/PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	1.14
DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH EDUCATION MOTHER COMPLETED	6.64
<b>QB1 TIME REMAINING IN CURRENT TERM OF SERVICE (N = 4,049)</b>	
LESS THAN 1 YEAR	15.44
1 YEAR OR MORE BUT < 2 YEARS	26.97
2 YEARS OR MORE BUT < 3 YEARS	28.28
3 YEARS OR MORE	29.32
<b>QB2A1 HOW LIKELY TO EXTEND CURRENT TERM OF SERVICE/REENLIST (N = 3,956)</b>	
0 PERCENT	27.55
10 PERCENT	6.37
20 PERCENT	4.58
30 PERCENT	4.25
40 PERCENT	3.46
50 PERCENT	14.86
60 PERCENT	3.03
70 PERCENT	5.28

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
80 PERCENT	6.88
90 PERCENT	4.85
100 PERCENT	18.88
<b>QB2A2 CURRENTLY SERVING AN INDEFINITE ENLISTMENT PERIOD (N = 277)</b>	
CURRENTLY SERVING INDEFINITE ENLISTMENT PERIOD	100.00
<b>QB3 HOW LIKELY TO STAY IN ARMY UNTIL MILITARY RETIREMENT (N = 4,059)</b>	
0 PERCENT	29.93
10 PERCENT	6.80
20 PERCENT	4.31
30 PERCENT	4.51
40 PERCENT	3.28
50 PERCENT	13.21
60 PERCENT	2.78
70 PERCENT	4.39
80 PERCENT	5.27
90 PERCENT	3.70
100 PERCENT	21.83
<b>QB4 IMPORTANCE: OBTAIN MORE EDUCATION TO COMPETE FOR CIVILIAN JOB (N = 4,071)</b>	
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	1.52
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	3.00
MODERATELY IMPORTANT	9.80
VERY IMPORTANT	34.44
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	51.24
<b>QB5 IMPORTANCE: OBTAIN MORE EDUCATION TO COMPETE IN MILITARY CAREER (N = 4,072)</b>	
NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	8.13
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	9.36
MODERATELY IMPORTANT	23.04
VERY IMPORTANT	32.29
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT	27.19
<b>QB6 IF LEAVE ARMY: HOW DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN GOOD CIVILIAN JOB (N = 4,074)</b>	
VERY DIFFICULT	4.15
DIFFICULT	17.65
NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT	41.48
EASY	24.91
VERY EASY	11.81
<b>QB7 PRIMARY REASON TO LEAVE MILITARY BEFORE RETIREMENT (N = 3,835)</b>	
REASON LEAVE ARMY/AMOUNT OF PAY	14.55
REASON LEAVE ARMY/AMOUNT OF TIME SEPARATED FROM FAMILY	21.02
REASON LEAVE ARMY/OVERALL QUALITY OF ARMY LIFE	24.88
REASON LEAVE ARMY/PROMOTION/ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES	7.85
REASON LEAVE ARMY/CONTINUE EDUCATION	10.98
REASON LEAVE ARMY/OTHER	20.73



Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
<b>QC1 CONFIDENCE TO COMPLETE ONLINE EDUCATION OR TRAINING COURSE (N = 4,067)</b>	
NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT	6.29
SLIGHTLY CONFIDENT	8.53
MODERATELY CONFIDENT	25.97
VERY CONFIDENT	32.31
EXTREMELY CONFIDENT	26.90
<b>QC2 ONLINE COURSES VS. CLASSROOM SETTING COURSES (N = 4,061)</b>	
MUCH PREFER CLASSROOM SETTING	26.96
SOMEWHAT PREFER CLASSROOM SETTING	20.91
NO PREFERENCE	26.23
SOMEWHAT PREFER ONLINE CLASSES	13.44
MUCH PREFER ONLINE CLASSES	12.46
<b>QC3A1 ACCESS TO COMPUTER/AT HOME, BARRACKS, QUARTERS (N = 3,443)</b>	
COMPUTER ACCESS AT HOME/BARRACKS/QUARTERS	68.84
ANSWERED OTHER	31.16
<b>QC3A2 ACCESS TO COMPUTER/AT WORK, WORK UNIT (N = 3,443)</b>	
COMPUTER ACCESS AT WORK OR WORK UNIT	31.89
ANSWERED OTHER	68.11
<b>QC3A3 ACCESS TO COMPUTER/AT TRAINING CLASSROOM (N = 3,443)</b>	
COMPUTER ACCESS AT TRAINING CLASSROOM	5.58
ANSWERED OTHER	94.42
<b>QC3A4 ACCESS TO COMPUTER/AT OTHER LOCATION (N = 3,443)</b>	
COMPUTER ACCESS AT OTHER LOCATION	22.04
ANSWERED OTHER	77.96
<b>QC3A5 NO ACCESS TO A COMPUTER (N = 4,053)</b>	
NO COMPUTER ACCESS	15.05
ANSWERED OTHER	84.95
<b>QD1A1 LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IF EARMYU AVAILABLE (N = 3,861)</b>	
0 PERCENT	9.19
10 PERCENT	2.25
20 PERCENT	2.18
30 PERCENT	2.87
40 PERCENT	2.36
50 PERCENT	10.26
60 PERCENT	3.21
70 PERCENT	5.75
80 PERCENT	8.70
90 PERCENT	8.18
100 PERCENT	45.04
<b>QD1A2 ALREADY PARTICIPATING IN EARMYU (N = 301)</b>	
ALREADY PARTICIPATING IN EARMYU	100.00
<b>QD2A1 LIKELY TO EXTEND TERM/REENLIST TO PARTICIPATE IN EARMYU (N = 3,832)</b>	
0 PERCENT	31.21
10 PERCENT	4.88
20 PERCENT	4.25

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
30 PERCENT	3.78
40 PERCENT	2.97
50 PERCENT	12.34
60 PERCENT	3.68
70 PERCENT	5.66
80 PERCENT	6.71
90 PERCENT	5.30
100 PERCENT	19.21
<b>QD2A2 ALREADY EXTENDED/REENLISTED TO PARTICIPATE IN EARMYU (N = 247)</b>	
ALREADY EXTENDED/REENLISTED TO PARTICIPATE IN EARMYU	100.00
<b>QD3 NEED FREE LAPTOP TO PARTICIPATE IN EARMYU (N = 3,962)</b>	
NO—COULD PARTICIPATE WITHOUT FREE LAPTOP	9.74
NO—BUT FREE LAPTOP HELPS A LOT	37.86
YES—CANNOT PARTICIPATE WITHOUT FREE LAPTOP	52.40
<b>QD4 RATHER PARTICIPATE—EARMYU OR OTHER ONLINE PROGRAM (N = 3,913)</b>	
EARMYU VS OTHER PROGRAM—PREFER EARMYU	66.85
EARMYU VS OTHER PROGRAM—PREFER OTHER ONLINE PROGRAM	19.63
EARMYU VS OTHER PROGRAM—NOT INTERESTED IN EITHER	13.52
<b>QD5A LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN EARMYU/NO LAPTOP/REDUCED SRR (N = 4,061)</b>	
0 PERCENT	13.86
10 PERCENT	3.52
20 PERCENT	3.40
30 PERCENT	4.04
40 PERCENT	3.52
50 PERCENT	12.78
60 PERCENT	4.63
70 PERCENT	7.46
80 PERCENT	8.50
90 PERCENT	7.26
100 PERCENT	31.03
<b>QD5B LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN A DIFFERENT ONLINE PROGRAM (N = 4,064)</b>	
0 PERCENT	13.83
10 PERCENT	4.26
20 PERCENT	4.38
30 PERCENT	5.51
40 PERCENT	5.29
50 PERCENT	22.74
60 PERCENT	6.25
70 PERCENT	8.61
80 PERCENT	8.98
90 PERCENT	5.00
100 PERCENT	15.16

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
<b>QD6A LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN EARMYU/NEED TO BUY LAPTOP/REDUCED SRR (N = 4,050)</b>	
0 PERCENT	26.77
10 PERCENT	5.26
20 PERCENT	5.56
30 PERCENT	5.58
40 PERCENT	4.30
50 PERCENT	13.75
60 PERCENT	4.27
70 PERCENT	5.06
80 PERCENT	6.30
90 PERCENT	4.94
100 PERCENT	18.22
<b>QD6B LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN DIFFERENT ONLINE PROGRAM (N = 4,036)</b>	
0 PERCENT	19.47
10 PERCENT	5.05
20 PERCENT	5.00
30 PERCENT	5.67
40 PERCENT	5.43
50 PERCENT	20.74
60 PERCENT	5.95
70 PERCENT	7.58
80 PERCENT	7.83
90 PERCENT	4.14
100 PERCENT	13.13
<b>QE1 AGE (N = 4,060)</b>	
UNDER 20 YEARS	9.58
20-24 YEARS	44.58
25-29 YEARS	20.96
30-34 YEARS	12.98
35-39 YEARS	7.96
40-44 YEARS	2.91
45-49 YEARS	0.81
50 YEARS OR OLDER	0.22
<b>QE2 GENDER (N = 4,025)</b>	
MALE	90.61
FEMALE	9.39
<b>QE3 RANK (N = 4,056)</b>	
PV1	2.47
PV2	6.78
PFC	19.40
CPL/SPC	32.94
SGT	19.35
SSG	11.64
SFC	5.05
MSG/1SG	1.48
SGM/CSM	0.89

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
<b>QE4 YEARS ACTIVE SERVICE (N = 3,941)</b>	
0	5.02
1	14.59
2	13.27
3	9.59
4	6.85
5	5.84
6	4.92
7	2.77
8	2.77
9	2.51
10	3.07
11	4.85
12	2.23
13	1.80
14	1.55
15	1.65
16	1.67
17	1.45
18	1.45
19	1.32
20	1.47
21	0.76
22	2.87
23	0.33
24	0.43
25	0.15
26	0.25
27	0.20
28	0.05
29	0.08
30	0.58
31	0.66
32	0.43
33	1.85
34	0.28
35	0.15
36	0.08
37	0.05
38	0.05
39	0.10
<b>QE5 YEAR CURRENT TERM ENDS (N = 3,437; 2000 + year)</b>	
0	1.80
1	1.98
2	3.29
3	14.58
4	24.12
5	24.82
6	12.07
7	5.70

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
8	3.67
9	1.80
10	1.25
11	0.79
12	0.47
13	0.35
14	0.23
15	0.20
16	0.06
20	0.23
21	0.09
22	0.15
23	0.15
24	0.32
25	0.20
26	0.20
27	0.09
28	0.03
29	0.06
30	0.29
31	0.12
32	0.03
33	0.12
34	0.20
35	0.20
36	0.15
37	0.15
38	0.03
39	0.03
<b>QE6A1 HISPANIC, LATINO, SPANISH ANCESTRY (N = 3,862)</b>	
NOT OF HISPANIC, LATINO, SPANISH ANCESTRY	81.31
YES	18.69
<b>QE6A2 MEXICAN, MEXICAN AMERICAN, CHICANO (N = 722)</b>	
YES, MEXICAN, MEXICAN AMERICAN, CHICANO	45.98
NO	54.02
<b>QE6A3 PUERTO RICAN (N = 722)</b>	
YES, PUERTO RICAN	22.30
NO	77.70
<b>QE6A4 CUBAN (N = 722)</b>	
YES, CUBAN	3.19
NO	96.81
<b>QE6A5 OTHER HISPANIC/SPANISH (N = 722)</b>	
YES, OTHER HISPANIC/SPANISH	33.66
NO	66.34
<b>QE7A1 AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE (N = 3,704)</b>	
YES, AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	6.37
NO	93.63

Table C.1 (continued)

Survey Question	Percent
<b>QE7A2 ASIAN (N = 3,704)</b>	
YES, ASIAN	3.73
NO	96.27
<b>QE7A3 BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN (N = 3,704)</b>	
YES, BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	24.87
NO	75.13
<b>QE7A4 NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDERS (N = 3,704)</b>	
YES, NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDERS	2.19
NO	97.81
<b>QE7A5 WHITE (N = 3,704)</b>	
YES, WHITE	69.09
NO	30.91
<b>QE8 MARITAL STATUS (N = 4,067)</b>	
MARRIED	49.45
NOT MARRIED	50.55
<b>QE9 NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN RESIDENCE (N = 4,054)</b>	
NO DEPENDENT CHILDREN	61.12
1 DEPENDENT CHILD	14.48
2 DEPENDENT CHILDREN	14.60
3 OR MORE DEPENDENT CHILDREN	9.79

**Table C.2**  
**Need Free Laptop to Participate in eArmyU**  
**(1 to 3; N = 3,941)**

Characteristic	Parameter Estimate	p
Intercept	2.488	< .0001
Male	0.018	0.562
Pay grade (vs. Private)		
Corporal/Specialist	-0.126	< .0001
Sergeant	-0.140	< .0001
Staff Sergeant	-0.237	< .0001
Sergeant First Class or higher	-0.150	0.006
Years of active service	-0.004	0.006
Year current term ends (ETS)	0.000	0.886
ETS not specified	0.106	0.001
Race/ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)		
Hispanic	0.077	0.008
Other nonwhite	0.046	0.242
African American	0.042	0.127
Married	-0.048	0.066
Number of dependent children in residence	0.020	0.128

**Table C.3**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for Regression Variables**

Personnel Record Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
eArmyU participant	175,696	0.166	0.372
Race/ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)			
Asian	175,696	0.033	0.179
Hispanic	175,696	0.104	0.306
African American	175,696	0.256	0.437
Other nonwhite	175,696	0.034	0.180
Male	175,696	0.872	0.334
Married	175,696	0.469	0.499
AFQT Category I-III A	175,696	0.626	0.484
Number of children (vs. none)			
1	175,696	0.109	0.312
2	175,696	0.088	0.284
3 or more	175,696	0.054	0.227
Pay grade (vs. Private)			
Corporal/Specialist	175,696	0.289	0.453
Sergeant	175,696	0.189	0.391
Staff Sergeant	175,696	0.129	0.335
Sergeant First Class	175,696	0.073	0.261
First Sergeant/Master Sergeant	175,696	0.021	0.142
Sergeant Major/Command Sergeant Major	175,696	0.006	0.075
Camp Casey	175,696	0.029	0.168
Camp Hovey	175,696	0.011	0.104
Fort Campbell	175,696	0.125	0.331
Fort Carson	175,696	0.074	0.261
Fort Drum	175,696	0.056	0.230
Fort Hood	175,696	0.219	0.414
Fort Lewis	175,696	0.089	0.285
Fort Richardson	175,696	0.011	0.105
Fort Benning	175,696	0.106	0.308
Fort Bragg	175,696	0.197	0.397
Fort Wainwright	175,696	0.023	0.149
Schofield Barracks	175,696	0.060	0.237
How likely to extend current term of service or reenlist	4,064	49.673	39.095
How likely to stay in Army until military retirement	4,059	44.920	39.553
Rather participate—in eArmyU or other online program	3,913	1.467	0.721



Table C.3 (continued)

Personnel Record Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job Type (vs. combat)			
Combat support	4,206	0.118	0.322
Combat service support	4,206	0.246	0.431
Force multiplier	4,206	0.092	0.289
Male	4,206	0.867	0.340
Married	4,206	0.478	0.500
Race/ethnicity (vs. white non-Hispanic)			
Hispanic	4,206	0.172	0.377
African American	4,206	0.201	0.401
Other nonwhite	4,206	0.079	0.270
Level of education (vs. HSG/GED)			
Less than high school graduate/no GED	4,041	0.014	0.116
1-2 years college, no degree	4,041	0.304	0.460
2+ years college or degree	4,041	0.125	0.331
Educational goal (vs. 2+ years of college or degree)			
High school graduation or GED	4,044	0.019	0.136
1-2 years college (no degree)	4,044	0.029	0.167
Importance of reaching highest level of education	4,053	4.010	0.902
Importance of continuing civilian education while in Army	4,063	3.723	1.125
The Army has a responsibility to assist soldier in completing education	4,058	3.680	0.877
Are you currently continuing your education or planning to continue? (vs. do not plan to continue)			
Undecided about continuing education	4,047	0.038	0.191
Currently continuing education	4,047	0.211	0.408
Plan to enroll after leaving active duty	4,047	0.200	0.400
Plan to enroll soon	4,047	0.395	0.489
Mother's highest level of education (vs. HSG/GED)			
1-2 years college, no degree	4,206	0.122	0.327
2+ years college or degree	4,206	0.111	0.314
Bachelor degree	4,206	0.101	0.301
Postgraduate education	4,206	0.081	0.272
Less than high school	4,206	0.119	0.324
Don't know	4,206	0.064	0.244
Years left to ETS (vs. 3 or more years)			
< 1 year	4,049	0.154	0.361
1-2 years	4,049	0.270	0.444
2-3 years	4,049	0.283	0.450

Table C.3 (continued)

Personnel Record Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Important to obtain more education to compete for civilian jobs	4,071	4.309	0.879
Important to obtain more education to compete in military career	4,072	3.611	1.207
If you left the Army, how difficult to obtain good civilian job	4,074	3.226	1.007
QB7	4,206	0.088	0.284
Reason to leave Army before retirement			
Pay	4,206	0.133	0.339
Continue education	4,206	0.100	0.300
Quality of life	4,206	0.227	0.419
Promotion opportunity	4,206	0.072	0.258
Time separated from family	4,206	0.192	0.394
Confidence in completing courses online	4,067	3.650	1.146
Prefer online setting (vs. classroom)	4,061	2.635	1.337
Computer access			
In training classroom	4,206	0.046	0.209
At home	4,206	0.563	0.496
At work	4,206	0.261	0.439
Other location	4,206	0.180	0.385
Need free laptop to participate in eArmyU	3,962	2.427	0.663
Pay grade (vs. Private)			
Corporal/Specialist	4,056	0.329	0.470
Sergeant	4,056	0.194	0.395
Staff Sergeant	4,056	0.116	0.321
Sergeant First Class or higher	4,056	0.074	0.262
Years of active service	3,941	7.874	8.165
Year current term ends (ETS)	4,206	4.489	4.599
ETS not specified	4,206	0.183	0.387
Number of dependent children in residence	4,054	1.731	1.038

## **Additional Input from the Education Center Staff Focus Groups**

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In the course of implementing eArmyU, a few primary models of intake and processing appear to have emerged. In some cases, both counseling support staff and counselors were dedicated solely to eArmyU, while in other cases support was provided by eArmyU staff and soldiers would also see general counselors. Finally, at some posts, the entire counseling team handled all available educational options, with eArmyU as one of those options. Each model has potential advantages. In the case of staff dedicated solely to eArmyU, for example, there are probably efficiencies of operation. In cases with counselors for whom eArmyU is one of many options to offer soldiers, the soldiers may be better positioned to hear the relative merits of each option, so that they can be sure eArmyU is the best fit.

Some counselors expressed concerns about aspects of the eArmyU program. They noted that eArmyU offers soldiers a great deal of autonomy from the Education Center. For instance, unlike the process for "regular" tuition assistance, soldiers need not check in consistently with counselors for eArmyU tuition assistance. This saves counselor time, but it also allows the possibility of potential problems, such as exceeding one's tuition assistance cap. Also importantly, soldiers may not adhere to or make progress in their degree plans. Though the program has some built-in mechanisms to avoid this, these are electronic guards and, therefore, potentially not as thorough as a counselor might be.

There were other reported instances of unanticipated effects caused by the eArmyU program. Some counselors felt that eArmyU

requires more attention and resources than do other educational programs. For example, they consistently reported information-sharing problems between EDMIS and the eArmyU portal. Glitches such as rejected records (requiring hand-entering eArmyU course information into EDMIS) can increase counselor workload. They also indicated that the process of withdrawing soldiers from courses can be time consuming. Some counselors worry that eArmyU is expensive for Education Centers and for the Army, because they believe it uses tuition assistance money at a faster rate than do other programs.

Communication with Headquarters, Army Continuing Education Services was reported to be positive in many regards. There were, nonetheless, some specific issues raised. For example, some staff reported a lack of sufficient information when eArmyU expanded to new posts. Simpler and timely information on changes to the eArmyU program and on new enrollments also was desired. Last, the Education Center staffs expressed interest in getting help from Headquarters with recoupments, to ensure they are done correctly.

## Informal Cost-Avoidance Analysis

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**Based on Army data on accessions, attrition, and retention, and costs, the cost avoidance resulting from eArmyU's retention effect appears to offset the cost of the laptop.**

### **Costs**

- \$48,829 per trained recruit
- \$7,600 per Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB)
- \$1,299 per laptop

### **Length of service**

- 5.5 years per new recruit
- 4 additional years per SRB
- Add up to 6 months of service for eArmyU laptop participants

### **Estimated cost avoidance (vs. \$1,299 per laptop)**

- Recruiting/training costs: \$4,439 for 6-month gain (\$2,219 for 3-month gain)
  - SRB costs: \$950 for 6-month gain (\$475 for 3-month gain)
- Overall cost avoidance due to increase in man-years retained through eArmyU: \$2,694 for 6-month gain (\$1,347 for 3-month gain), using even mix of new recruits and SRBs to replace man-years gained through eArmyU

## Bibliography

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United States Army, *eArmyU Implementation Plan*, 2003.

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The eArmyU continuing education program allows enlisted soldiers to earn college credits while on active duty. This study sought to determine how to make eArmyU available to more individuals while controlling program costs. Historically, the program's primary cost had been attributed to the laptop computer it provides. This study examined how the existing eArmyU program, as well as how removing the laptop or other provisions, affect various soldier outcomes.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation monograph series. RAND monographs present major research findings that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors. All RAND monographs undergo rigorous peer review to ensure high standards for research quality and objectivity.



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ISBN 0-8330-3708-0



MG-293-A